

Lateral

JOURNAL OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

[ISSUES](#) [REVIEWS](#) [CONTRIBUTE](#)

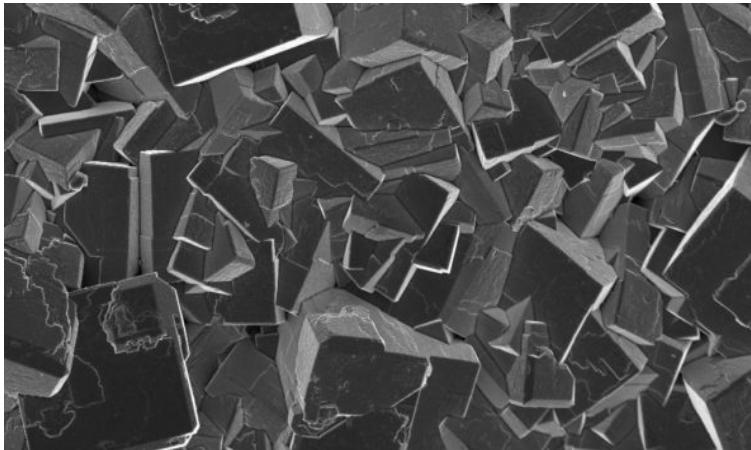
[SUBSCRIBE](#) [ABOUT](#)

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Editors' Introduction: Expanding Laterally – Stefanie A. Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula with Robert F. Carley

[SCROLL ▼ DOWN](#)

■ ISSUE 7.2 (FALL 2018)



Editors' Introduction: Expanding Laterally

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula with Robert F Carley



Killer Drones, Legal Ethics, and the Inconvenient Referent

Vaheed Ramazani



Troubling the Home/Land in Showtime's *Homeland*: The Ghost of 1979 and the Haunting Presence of Iran in the American Imaginary

Allia Ida Griffin



Dance, Real Estate, and Institutional Critique: Reconsidering Glorya Kaufman's Dance Philanthropy in Los Angeles

Olive McKeon



Indigenous Cosmopolitanism: The Alaska Native Heritage Center

Marina Tyquiengco



Art as Protest, Cooking as Resistance: Everyday Life in Taipei's Housing Rights Movement

Lily Wei



How Makers and Preppers Converge in Premodern and Post-Apocalyptic Ruin

Josef Nguyen

■ 2018 RANDY MARTIN PRIZE



License to Extract: How Louisiana's Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast is Sinking It

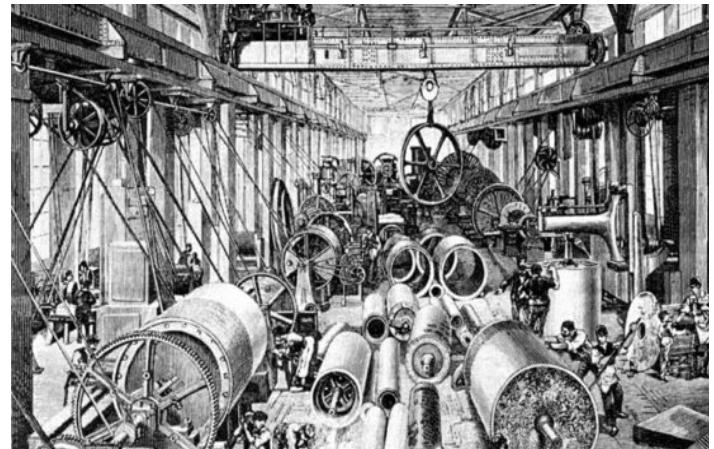
Ned Randolph

■ FORUM: UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME



Introduction: Political Economies of Basic Income

David Zeglen



Basic Income as Ideology from Below

David Zeglen

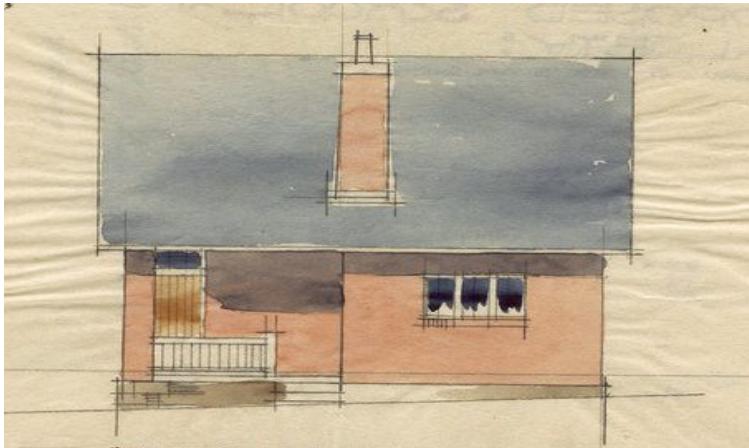


Species-Beings in Crisis: UBI and the Nature of Work

Kimberly Klinger

From Company Town to Post-Industrial: Inquiry on Redistribution of Space and Capital with a Universal Basic Income

Caroline West



We are All Housewives: Universal Basic Income as Wages for Housework

Lindsey Macdonald

BOOK REVIEWS

Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference by Grace Kyungwon Hong (University of Minnesota Press)
Reviewed by Nicole T Castro, December 2018

The Essentialist Villain: On Leo Bersani by Mikko Tuhkanen (State University of New York Press)
Reviewed by Patrick ffrench, November 2018

Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing by David Parisi (University of Minnesota)
Reviewed by Ricky Crano, September 2018

Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830–1934 by Melissa N. Stein (University of Minnesota Press)
Reviewed by Alexis de Coning, August 2018

Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and The Crisis of Racial Burnout by Lynn Mie Itagaki (University of Minnesota Press)
Reviewed by Saugher Nojan, August 2018

Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S. Political Culture by Dana Cloud (Ohio State University Press)
Reviewed by Jason Hannan, July 2018

The Social Life of Financial Derivatives: Markets, Risk, and Time by Edward LiPuma (Duke University Press)
Reviewed by Christian Quaresma, July 2018

The Pink Tide: Media Access and Political Power in Latin America edited by Lee Artz (Rowman & Littlefield)
Reviewed by Paula Santa Rosa, June 2018

Credits

Cover image: "Untitled," Microscopy photo from Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, Department of Energy. Article images (from left to right, top to bottom): "Photo of a Predator drone;" "after the war," bahereh; "Glorya Kaufman Hall at UCLA (Los Angeles, California)," Corey Seeman, 2016; "Whale Bones," Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, AL; with permission;" "Untitled," TAVUR (Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal); "The Survival Kit of Eight-Year Boy," Khuroshvili Ilya; "Louisiana Coast," Kerry Maloney @TravelerBr with permission); "Basic Income Triptych," Russell Shaw Briggs; "Die Montagehalle der Maschinenfabrik Escher Wyss in Zürich in der Neumühle"; "Craftsman Tools"; "Miners and their gather around the community store and office. P V & K Coal Company, Clover Gap Mine, Lejunior, Harlan County, Kentucky," Department of the Interior; "Dalgety School Plan." Copyedi Donlon.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine, Chris Alen Sula, "Introduction," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.1>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Editors' Introduction: Expanding Laterally

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula with Robert F Carley

ABSTRACT This issue marks a number of important milestones for the journal and features a combination of peer-reviewed academic articles, a forum on universal basic income (UBI), and book reviews. With this issue we are also pleased announce a number of changes to the *Lateral* editorial team. These changes significantly extend the possibilities for the journal into the future, while reinforcing the work that is already underway.

This issue marks a number of important milestones for the journal and features a combination of peer-reviewed academic articles, a forum on universal basic income (UBI), and book reviews. We are also pleased announce changes to the *Lateral* editorial team. These changes significantly extend the possibilities for the journal into the future, while reinforcing the work that is already underway.

Over a number of recent issues, *Lateral* has expanded its readership and its base of authors through special issues and sections, which have featured focused considerations of particular theoretical, historical, and political points of entry.¹ In order to further such work, we are incredibly pleased to welcome Rayya El Zein, who will join the editorial team as the inaugural Forum Editor. Comprised of shorter articles that are nonetheless rigorously cited and argued, forums can be standalone sections or might invite a variety of responses across journal issues and media. The forum in this issue, for instance, began as a session at the Cultural Studies Association (CSA) Conference in Pittsburgh in 2018, was significantly developed and revised, and will continue with responses that will be curated and published in an upcoming issue of *Lateral*. Rayya brings an impressive vision for the future of this section and we hope that forum entries will continue to provide a venue for a variety of voices and act as a site of debate and critique within cultural studies.

As a way of moving book reviews towards publication quickly while highlighting even more of the incredible range of scholarship being done in cultural studies, we are very pleased to welcome Beenash Jafri and David Reznik as co-editors of the book review section. With complementary areas of expertise, this team of book review editors also represents the continued development of that section of the journal. Both Beenash and David push cultural studies in important directions in their own work, and we look forward to the ways that they will also shape *Lateral*.

Lastly, we're delighted to welcome Rob Carley to the editorial team. As the very first book review editor at *Lateral*, Rob has impressively developed a space for careful consideration of books in the field, while establishing *Lateral* as a journal positioned to offer the first reviews of new work. Under his direction, the book review section became an important venue for authors, publishers, and readers to engage with emerging and newly established ideas in cultural studies. Rob is leaving the book review section in excellent condition and with room to grow. Now, as Rob becomes a member of the editorial team, the journal will further benefit from his intellect, tenacity, and keen understanding of the

work of the journal and cultural studies broadly. All of these changes make for an exciting time for *Lateral*.

In this issue's lead article, "[Killer Drones, Legal Ethics, and the Inconvenient Referent](#)," Vaheed Ramazani examines the discourses surrounding the US drone program. Though the Obama administration put an end to some of the most inhumane practices of the program, it remained committed to the killing of non-combatants as an acceptable operation in the pursuit of identified targets. Through a critique of just war theory and the administration's own statements about drone strikes, Ramazani unmasks the logics of humanitarianism and intention that serve, hypocritically, to justify killing of non-combatants for the sake of the "greater good."

Allia Ida Griffin uses an intersectional framework to interpret the television show *Homeland* in "[Troubling the Home/Land in Showtime's Homeland: The Ghost of 1979 and the Haunting Presence of Iran in the American Imaginary](#)." Griffin focuses on the character Fara, and analyzes six key scenes from throughout the third season of the show in conversation with critical race theorists ranging from Hortense Spillers and W.E.B. DuBois to Neda Maghbouleh and Michael Eric Dyson. Through this analysis, Griffin demonstrates the impossibility which early 21st century US cultural frameworks make for Fara and women like her, an impossibility to be both Iranian and American that has immense stakes for people's lives.

Considering the ways that the arts are bound up with urban planning and real estate, Olive McKeon offers analysis and critique of the philanthropy of Glorya Kaufman in "[Dance, Real Estate, and Institutional Critique: Reconsidering Glorya Kaufman's Dance Philanthropy in Los Angeles](#)." McKeon examines Kaufman's institutional giving and status as a dance patron as opportunity "to chart the relation between concert dance and capital accumulation and to consider how dance patronage might function to legitimate real estate development." The article offers insight into the sources of wealth that allow for substantial voice in the dance community of Los Angeles, as well as an important understanding of the material effects of cultural patronage more broadly.

Marina Tyquiengco's visits to the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) in Anchorage, Alaska form the basis for "[Indigenous Cosmopolitanism: The Alaska Native Heritage Center](#)," which looks at the interplay between two different strands of cosmopolitanism at this site: cosmopolitan curiosity and indigenous cosmopolitanism. Tyquiengco explores indigenous involvement in the ANHC's foundation and operations, especially the work of the staff of cultural guides who make it "a site of living culture," to demonstrate how the ANHC operates with cosmopolitan aplomb as a site of indigenous self-determination. Drawing from the cultural interactions that take place at the ANHC among Alaska Natives and between Alaska Natives and non-Native visitors, Tyquiengco argues that, while the ANHC does evoke the colonialist nostalgia at the heart of cosmopolitan curiosity, the site powerfully disrupts this dynamic and shatters the "conceptualized timelessness of Alaska Natives" by defining "heritage" as the continuation of tradition into the future.

Lily Wei provides essential insights into the housing rights movement in Taipei in "[Art as Protest, Cooking as Resistance: Everyday Life in Taipei's Housing Rights Movement](#)." The article provides interviews, photos, and perceptive analysis of "the relationship between protest art and the neoliberal city." Set against the broad background of neoliberal policy-making and socioeconomic stratification, Wei examines on-the-ground tactics of protest movements in Taipei that resist the eviction and displacement that so often accompany "development" projects and city "renewal." With special attention to the aesthetic choices and deliberate use of artistic and culinary processes, the article puts the reader on the

front line, as it were, of housing struggles in Taipei. In doing so, Wei opens lines of comparison to other fronts and struggles in many other parts of the world.

In “[How Makers and Preppers Converge in Premodern and Post-Apocalyptic Ruin](#),” Josef Nguyen traces a history of the maker movement in the United States, with particular attention to how contemporary apocalyptic thought has influenced this tradition to generate prepping and its logics. Nguyen demonstrates how prepping constructs catastrophe as a daily event, apocalypse as punishment for those who are not prepared, and the post-apocalypse as a playground for US dominance, through analysis of a variety of contemporary cultural objects. From the American Preppers Network website to the reality television show *The Colony*, US prepper culture constructs individual responsibility, competition, and white male supremacy as necessary values for the future. In the process, Nguyen argues, these logics deploy a white American exceptionalism, positioning non-Western and non-white locales, from the “Global South” to Los Angeles and New Orleans, as sites that are both premodern and already post-apocalyptic. Because these are locations of timeless decay, they cannot really experience the apocalypse and are thus doomed to their ruin.

This issue of *Lateral*/features the article resulting from the 2018 Randy Martin Prize. The prize is given by the Cultural Studies Association to an outstanding graduate student essay presented at the annual CSA conference each spring. This year, Ned Randolph has developed the 2018-award-winning essay into the article “[License to Extract: How Louisiana’s Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast is Sinking It](#).” In the article, Randolph examines Louisiana governmental policies and the “historically extractive nature of Louisiana’s industries and their deleterious effects on the environment through a neoliberal valuation of the landscape.” The article is a model for close reading of state and corporate documents and Randolph’s methodology opens a significant space for critique of actions and ideologies that shape both the economy and ecology.

This issue of *Lateral*/also contains a [forum on Universal Basic Income](#) edited by David Zeglen. Zeglen’s own contribution to the forum, “[Basic Income as Ideology from Below](#),” offers an important and original theoretical contribution that is connected to contemporary approaches to organizing a left front Zeglen identifies the forces which close off meaningful and potentially strategic discourses which could be used to frame arguments about UBI politically, as an ideology from below, in the current conjuncture. In the process, Zeglen’s piece contributes to an important and underrepresented tradition in cultural studies (particularly its Marxist methodological influences in the 1970s) by reordering cultural theory to better articulate connections between Marxist approaches to political economy and ideology theory.

In “[From Company Town to Post-industrial: Inquiry on the Redistribution of Space and Capital with a Universal Basic Income](#),” Caroline West approaches UBI as a potential way to address the long historical trajectory of resource extraction and market redistribution from country-to-city. West highlights how, in Appalachia, this takes the civil and social form of the “company town” which has degenerated, through post-industry, into neoliberal structurelessness, malaise, and both glib and more social forms of entrepreneurialism culturally appropriate to Appalachia. West’s analysis operates in the historical and social context of the mass industrial development of energy commodity production (in the form of primary and secondary commodities) and it describes the post-industrial decline that follows and its effects on the region. By identifying key points in the cultural and social history of the region, which is uniquely dependent upon a culture family-centered networks, West’s work on Appalachia and its people, who have been lost to an American style neoliberal condensation of posterity demonstrates, not unlike E.P.

Thompson, the importance of situating and prioritizing cultural life within historical contexts.

In “[Species Being in Crisis: UBI and The Nature of Work](#),” Kimberly Klinger analyzes the distinction and the dialectic between labor as alienation and labor as species being. The relationship between alienation and species being, in Klinger’s argument, is predicated on the political, social organizational, and relational framework in which labor is imbedded. Invoking the humanist tradition in Marx’s work, Klinger argues that UBI, as a political tool in the right hands, has the potential to rearrange social relations so that species being, as a form of conscious life-activity, intervenes in the capital-labor relation and re-centers social relations as, what Marx calls in his earlier work, the relations of direct producers to one another.

In “[We Are All Housewives': Universal Basic Income as Wages for Housework](#)” Lindsey Macdonald offers an important, original, and knife-edge sharp political-economic analysis of UBI in the context of contemporary threads of Marxist thought. Macdonald connects political economy to social and cultural theory to address power; identifying the constraints and opportunities in the strategic conjuncture that could assist in identifying and specifying the extent to which UBI could work to tip the forces in class struggles. Where capital can co-opt UBI as either a stop-gap measure or a framework for weak reformism (as a kind of “poor law”); UBI, on the side of labor, could provide the basis for a revolutionary socialist project. Working through Silvia Federici and Tithi Bhattacharya’s contributions to the contemporary renewal of Social Reproduction Theory, Macdonald articulates how the potentially revolutionary connections between class, race, gender, and inequality in the context of UBI can serve as the *conditio sin qua non* that could either heighten or explode capital’s social contradictions.

Finally, journals exist through the collective labor of a community. We are humbled to work alongside so many truly extraordinary scholars, artists, and activists. The editorial team has expanded significantly as has the journal’s reach and future vision. We hope you will be in touch with your articles and project proposals, forum ideas, and books to review. We look forward to working with you.

Notes

1. See for instance: Chris Eng and Amy King, eds., “Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities,” *Latera/5*, no. 1 (Spring 2016), <http://csalateral.org/archive/issue/alt-humanities-forum/> 

Bio



Stefanie A Jones

SAJ is a McNair scholar, an organizer, and an educator, and received their doctorate from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. SAJ has published in edited collections and *Theatre Journal* and has taught at Brooklyn College, Hunter College, the College of Staten Island, Marymount Manhattan College, and New York University. SAJ’s research explores war, white supremacy, twenty-first century capitalist economies, and the connections between class formation and political practice.

Bio

Twitter



Eero Laine

Eero Laine is an Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

 [Bio](#)

 [Twitter](#)



Chris Alen Sula

Chris Alen Sula is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Digital Humanities and Data Analytics & Visualization at Pratt Institute's School of Information. He teaches graduate courses in digital humanities, information visualization, critical theory, and community building and engagement. His research applies visualization and network science to humanities datasets, especially those chronicling the history of philosophy. He has also published articles on citation studies in the humanities; the connection between digital humanities, libraries, and cultural heritage institutions; the politics of technology; and ethical and activist uses of visualization.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Vaheed Ramazani, "Killer Drones, Legal Ethics, and the Inconvenient Referent," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.2>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Killer Drones, Legal Ethics, and the Inconvenient Referent

Vaheed Ramazani

ABSTRACT I offer a close reading of the legal and political discourses by means of which the United States government recently has sought to legitimate its use of weaponized drones to carry out targeted assassinations of suspected anti-U.S. combatants abroad. Situating my analysis in the context of philosophical approaches to the problem of truth and linguistic reference, I examine official government speeches, legal documents, and reports of civilian casualties. My semiological critique of these texts is carried out both within and against the "humanitarian" framework of just war theory, my dual approach being necessitated by the twofold strategy of the government's justificatory rhetoric: on the one hand, the government's public discourse distorts the accepted meaning of certain unambiguous and pragmatically functional legal signifiers (the *jus ad bellum* use of terms such as self-defense, imminence, and necessity, for example); on the other hand, it exploits the uncertainty that is endemic to some of those very same terms (necessity and proportionality in particular) when they are used to refer to the *jus in bello* quantification and valuation of incommensurable variables—of, typically, a particular number of civilian casualties relative to the amount of "military advantage" to be derived from the attack that "unintentionally" produces those casualties.

The present essay opens with a brief intervention into the debate over whether "antifoundationalist" theories of language such as deconstruction and postmodernism can be invoked to defend ethical standards of justice, rights, and political agency that are not compromised by violence, mystification, or the desire for power. Focusing on the concept/event of war in relation to the law of war, I propose to reconcile poststructuralism's antiessentialist, contextualist approach to truth with a neo-Kantian or Habermasian pragmatics of "postmetaphysical universalism," in which validity claims would be the result of rational, transparent, and inclusive procedures of intersubjective deliberation and empirical inquiry; as such, they would be generalizable across heterogeneous belief systems, even as they would also be recognized as historically contingent and potentially fallible forms of knowledge.¹

The second section of the essay offers a preliminary consideration of the language of humanitarian law and ethics, parsing those terms and concepts that tend to be resistant to semantic slippage from those whose denotative and referential elasticity makes them vulnerable to manipulation in certain contexts. I note that it is the unstable or indeterminate legal signifiers that have given rise to a "humanitarian" discourse in which the "lesser evil" of a particular amount of "collateral damage" is weighed against the supposedly "greater good" of a certain amount of anticipated military gain.

In the third section, I show how the logic of lesser-evil humanitarianism was used by the Obama administration to justify, normalize, and perpetuate the deployment of weaponized drones in a campaign of targeted assassinations of suspected anti-US "militants." Here I look at government speeches and legal documents in which, I argue, the designation of "enemy combatant" is legally problematic, and in which certain fundamental and unambiguous principles of international law pertaining to the use of lethal force (e.g., necessity, imminence, and preemption) are egregiously distorted.

The fourth section reviews the debate over “collateral damage” statistics, pitting the government’s belated claims to transparency and legal-ethical propriety against the more credible findings of civil rights groups and independent organizations.

The fifth section frames the question of statistical death-ratios within a critique of the traditional ethical law of double effect, which underwrites the lesser-evil calculations of military law and which, in certain interpretive contexts, I find, turns the legal tropes of humanity, necessity, discrimination, and proportionality toward semantic, referential, and ethical aporia.

The sixth and penultimate section examines the intentionality clause of double effect, finding it to be problematic both in theory and in practice. Two factors in particular—the drone program’s deliberate and systematic use of inherently flawed targeting techniques and the psychological trauma suffered indiscriminately by populations subjected to continual drone overflight—compel us to interrogate the boundary between the intentional and the foreseeable and, correlatively, between terrorism and *jus in bello*.

The essay’s conclusion highlights the fetishistic structure of lesser-evil reasoning in the official discourse on civilian casualties, and returns to the issue of unprivileged belligerency, this time in the context of Donald Trump’s expansion of the CIA’s role in approving drone strikes.

Signs and Truth

Both war and the laws that would govern it are products of language, of a medium whose relation to the material world on the one hand and to meaning on the other is not always predictable. War and peace are, after all, correlated modes of interstate and intercultural (mis)communication. The present essay seeks to shed light on what is at stake for theories of just war when their real-world engagements are understood to be an effect of the dialectical tension between pragmatic agency and semiotic indeterminacy, or between performativity and ungovernability, that is latent in every act of signification.

Philosophers and legal experts, however specialized their idiom, dispose of the same imperfectly transparent medium as do journalists, historians, military planners, government officials, political scientists, indeed anyone who is charged (professionally or otherwise) with using linguistic artifacts to attempt to convey something of the reality of war. To accomplish that task effectively, however, one must keep in mind the a priori symbolic structure of war itself. Modern warfare, the very referent that our vocabulary aims to describe and/or to regulate, is not only an object but also a creation of knowledge. It is an irreducible amalgam of fact and fiction, contingency and convention—phenomenal reality and “metaphors we live by.”² War is a cultural artifact, a simulacrum that precedes and informs any occurrence and any experience of “real wars,” and that any such experience will either confirm or contradict, reinforce or transform. Newspapers, films, books, and public monuments; toys, television shows, and video games; these and other media translate and communicate human experience while at the same time shaping cultural identity; they not only represent but also *mediate* war; they determine, that is, what the reality of a war will be, as well as what the material contingencies of a war can mean, in any particular sociopolitical ecology. The tropes of military ethics necessarily seek to ground themselves within this living hermeneutic, this intermedial space of convergence and divergence between War and wars. Not surprisingly, then, the attempt of diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners of the law to justify or to prohibit, to implement or to contain, in short, to adjudicate the violence of war, is a communicative project that places the act of mimesis under enormous stress, relying on inherently aleatory linguistic constructions to anticipate, instantiate, refer to, and manage material

contexts that are fraught with uncertainty, and in which errors of articulation and reception can be (and often are) gravely consequential.

Insofar as the meta-languages of military ethics and humanitarian law exist not only to limit but also to enable warfare, they are an integral part of the organized chaos they name. On the one hand, they are illocutionary acts, disciplinary enunciations that perform (that literally *make*) war; on the other hand, they are mere abstractions within a closed system of differences, signs that are never fully capable of controlling either the events that they set in motion or the multiple interpretations that those events call forth. To say that war is both materially and semiotically excessive is not however to suggest that it is impenetrable to analysis, nor is it to excuse war's continued existence as a ready-to-hand political convention. Indeed, it is not only because of but also despite the "fog of war," not only because of but also despite semantic slippage, that the rules of war can be negotiated and revised, that the very existence of war can be challenged. It is, in other words, precisely to the extent that not only the laws of war but also the lived, subjective experience of real wars exist as abstract, semiotic constructs, as interdependent and overlapping systems of meaning, that they can be transformed, turned, one would hope, from the multiplication of pretexts and permissions for war toward the delegitimization of the organized practice of violence as a political institution.

The languages of politics and the law are committed, in principle, to a representational pragmatics of referential accuracy and historical truth. Such a project is in no way inimical to the use of tropes and metaphors, and cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy between indirect and deceptive modes of figuration on the one hand and direct, literal, and transparent forms on the other. If we accept Lakoff and Johnson's claim that our very processes of reasoning are themselves grounded in metaphor, it follows that not even the most rigorously logical methods of political or legal persuasion can escape metaphoricity; indeed, they depend on it. Accordingly, abuses of the formal idiom of human rights and international justice, like abuses of political rhetoric, are not the inevitable result of linguistic *différance*; they are enabled by, but are not endemic to, the arbitrariness of signs and the figurative nature of language.

Every act of intersubjective communication sets in motion an aleatory process of encoding and decoding that brings into fragile balance the various psycholinguistic competencies and sociocultural assumptions of the communicants. Where nonfictional narratives are concerned, truth, whether in a very particular or in a very general sense, always is a function of diacritical coherence, the coherence, that is, of signs in relation to their simultaneously intertextual, intra-textual, and extra-textual *contexts*—the archive of synchronic meanings that they evoke; the syntagmatic chain in which they are positioned; and the phenomenal, material, or historical objects and events to which they refer. And it is precisely within an especially broad and complex version of context—one that embraces a whole spectrum of cultures and belief systems—that the treaties and conventions pertaining to the conduct of war must formulate and secure their specific truth-claims.

The resulting legal and ethical principles are considered to be universally valid not primarily because states have broadly consented to be bound by them, but because they are guaranteed by rights inhering in individuals and transcending the interests of the states themselves. And yet, in practice, the contractual if not moral legitimacy of international humanitarian law derives precisely from its consensual status, its origination in transparent, publicly validated procedures of reasoning that are governed by context-dependent standards of evidence and impartiality. So, when political or governmental speech acts succeed in swaying public opinion by disseminating information and arguments that lack logical and/or referential coherence, the effectiveness of such propaganda is a function not of the inherent instability but of the distortion of signs, not

of the deconstruction but of the destruction of meaning. The selling of the Iraq War to the American people is an obvious case in point. The war was largely the result of an ideological discourse that cultivated the illusion of a “natural” connection between words, meanings, and things while in fact driving a dangerous wedge between them, producing a profound disconnect, a politically useful *incoherence*, between the administration’s apocalyptic prophesies on the one hand and existing geopolitical realities on the other. Crucially, then, the invasion of Iraq represented a naïve—and/or deliberate—failure on the part of not only the government and the judiciary but also the citizenry and the “fourth estate” to appreciate the extent to which both the integrity and the effectiveness of our foreign policy depend on a general respect for the professional standards of evidence, demonstration, and proof to which political, legal, theoretical, and informational discourses have a special responsibility, particularly when they address the eventuality of war.

Necessity, Proportionality, and the Logic of the Lesser Evil

Coaxing consensus from (transcultural) heterogeneity, international law has stabilized many of its key terms in the last century or so, defining in clear and comprehensive fashion specific categories of persons (e.g., combatant, civilian), actions (e.g., genocide, torture), objects (e.g., lawful and unlawful weapons), and location (e.g., a munitions factory as opposed to an apartment building or a hospital). This is not to say that the semantic boundaries of such categories can never be contested, or adapted to changing circumstances, but that a wide range of meanings and objects denoted by the vocabulary of wartime ethics has been largely consistent over time, and that the enduring functionality of such classifications is the result of not only their continual reaffirmation in the international forum but also their accessibility to modification.

In view of the relative impermeability of much of the legal lexicon pertaining to the conduct of war, challenges to the standards that that lexicon has established generally rest, as I mentioned above, neither on the unintentional misinterpretation of ambiguous terminology nor on the fine-grained deconstruction of simple binaries; they tend instead to be manifestly sophistic attempts to create and exploit semantic indeterminacy where such indeterminacy cannot plausibly be found, and to circumvent meanings that, despite their historical contingency and lack of metaphysical warrant, are contextually fortified against misconstrual. Legal obfuscation and evasion typically involve various strategies for misrepresenting, euphemizing, or “disappearing” the referent. For example, as I will show in this essay, the techniques of legal and political misprision by means of which the United States government would justify its use of drones to conduct “targeted assassinations” of suspects include the following: the disavowal of clandestine military and intelligence operations carried out by the CIA and the US military’s Joint Special Operations Command; the unilateral imputation of a specious “flexibility” to restrictive legal concepts; the arbitrary or mistaken shifting of people, places, or events from one legal category to another (e.g., from civilian to combatant, schoolhouse to training camp, or wedding procession to military convoy); the refusal to investigate (and the will to underestimate) civilian and combatant “casualties”; the propagandistic exaggeration of the precision and the reliability of new weapons technologies; the targeting of unknown persons solely on the basis of statistical estimates; and the use of the language of military ethics to camouflage what may be war crimes.

Of course, not all humanitarian principles related to the conduct of war are defined with precision and detail. Uncertainty afflicts in particular the juridical concepts of necessity and proportionality, definitions of which have served to justify ad hoc exceptions to normally unequivocal moral constraints on the use of state violence, permitting under certain circumstances the perpetration of a “lesser evil” for the sake of preventing a

purportedly greater evil, or of promoting the emergence of a supposedly greater good. In the current practice of drone “warfare,” as we shall see, this has been taken to mean that an extrajudicial assassination comporting a certain statistical probability of “collateral” civilian deaths may legitimately be authorized on the grounds that the executed individual is—or might someday become—a source of danger to the security of the United States. The already legally and morally exceptional means (deliberately killing other human beings), along with its “unavoidable” consequences (inadvertently killing human beings who fall under the category of bystander or civilian), are deemed necessary and proportional in relation to the specific nature of the menace to be averted, the immediate “military advantage” to be gained from the attack (*jus in bello*), and the overall ends of the war itself (*jus ad bellum*).³ The problem is, first, that each of these variables considered in isolation—the level of violence to be administered, its intended or unintended consequences, the amount of potential harm it aims to pre-empt, and the amount of good it may be expected to accomplish—is always to some extent subjective, speculative, or unpredictable; and second, that the law invites us to establish equations, or rates of exchange, between variables that, in addition to being highly unpredictable, represent concepts (including properties, quantities, and qualities) that are irreducible to any common standard of measure, hence between which there exists no compelling logical equivalence. Typically, again, the “value” of an estimated number of civilians’ lives is balanced against the “value” of the amount of military gain that is expected to accrue from the attack that will accidentally if foreseeably kill the civilians. In such cases, the equivalencies that underwrite relative or proportional value are abstractions from concrete and particular phenomena, translations of incommensurable objects and meanings into a homogeneous economy of compatible data. We are asked, in effect, to construct metaphorical bridges between hypothetical referents despite evidentiary uncertainties and conceptual differences that make coherent comparisons practically impossible.

The difficulty—or the impossibility—of quantifying and relativizing factors that are objectively and experientially incompatible is partly a function the legal language itself, and partly a function of who has the power to interpret that language—that is, which state, sub-state, or supra-state entity has not only the legitimate political and juridical authority but also the requisite geopolitical influence (or hegemony) to make and impose its own particular assessments. In the absence of clear, detailed, and universally agreed-upon guidelines, and of effective international mechanisms for equitably enforcing them, the United States has arrogated to itself the right to devise “ethical” algorithms for measuring minimally acceptable thresholds of violence, risk, and damage on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, as Eyal Weizman has shown, the basic benchmarks and ratios in this economy of the lesser evil are formulated “within a closed system in which those posing the dilemma, the options available for choice, the factors to be calculated and the very parameters of calculation are unchallenged.” This self-regulating moral unilateralism has resulted in what Weizman calls “the humanitarian present,” an increasingly normalized condition wherein proponents of human rights and humanitarian law collude with military and political powers in the creation of a “necro-economy” of the least possible means, a moral technology in which the utilitarian claim to moderate violence is part of the very logic by which violence now justifies and perpetuates itself: “less brutal measures,” Weizman explains, “are also those that may be more easily naturalized, accepted and tolerated—and hence more frequently used, with the result that a greater evil may be reached cumulatively.”⁴ The drone program is of course paradigmatic in this regard. The conventional wisdom that the use of weaponized drones not only eliminates the need to put US soldiers’ lives at risk but also generally results in fewer civilian casualties than ground assaults and attempts at capture has served as the decisive

rationale for dramatically increasing the frequency and the scope of lethal drone operations, and for prolonging indefinitely this supposedly more ethical form of warfare. While the existence of Weizman's "humanitarian present" has certainly been confirmed by our protracted and media-managed War on Terror, history has also shown that greater evils do not have to develop cumulatively in order to be well tolerated.⁵ Lesser-evil arguments customarily are invoked to excuse the United States' bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the Bush-Cheney world of infinitely imaginable "unknown unknowns," they served to justify a host of violations of the law in the name of the law, including indefinite detention, extraordinary rendition, torture, targeted assassinations, and a war of aggression during which additional "necessary" evils—the indiscriminate and excessive use of force, collective punishment, and other war crimes—were committed with impunity.⁶

After becoming president in 2009, Barack Obama did take significant measures to put an end to some of the most inhumane of his predecessor's practices; however, a number of the unconstitutional institutions and procedures pioneered by the Bush administration have endured,⁷ among the more notable of which is the extension and the acceleration of the use of weaponized drones to carry out "targeted killings" of suspected anti-US combatants both inside and outside of officially declared war zones. Attempts to justify this extralegal policy tend to rely heavily on the self-comforting yet self-compromising "morality" of the aforementioned "humanitarian present," portraying the assassination program's yield of thousands of civilian casualties as an unavoidable lesser evil arising from the United States' compulsory self-defense against the greater evil of an always imminent threat of international terrorism; or, to put the rationale in terms of the greater good rather than the greater evil, thousands of civilian casualties abroad are alleged to be the necessary result of the United States' protection and furtherance of the life and liberty not just of Americans but of freedom-loving peoples around the world. My point here is that both the greater good and the greater evil are conceived as infinitely extendable, their positive or negative moral stakes being limited only by the capacity of the imagination. Thus, virtually any amount of force used to repel anticipated terrorist attacks of untellable or unknowable force and frequency will readily appear proportionate to the incalculable threat that it averts, and, correlatively, virtually any number of unintentional civilian deaths resulting from this self-defensive use of force will likely be seen as proportionate, both to the unspecified but always greater number of (other) lives to be saved and to the inestimable value of the principles to be preserved. Within this closed system, the available actions and the foreseeable outcomes, the relevant considerations and the standards for weighing them, are, as Weizman pointed out, unilaterally restricted; however, other variables and criteria are at the same time conveniently left open-ended or vague. Since this peculiar combination of rigidity and elasticity, both of context and of conception, is common currency in the discourse of political bureaucracy, unverified and dehumanizing truisms about the inevitability of "collateral" casualties may even, at first blush, sound logically persuasive (as, for example, when a high-ranking government official casually remarks, with breathtaking sweep and absence of specificity, "sometimes you have to take a life to save even more lives").⁸

Imminence, Preemption, Feasibility

The clandestine program of targeted killing first came to the attention of the American public with the publication by NBC in February 2012 of a leaked Department of Justice "White Paper" and by way of a subsequent series of cryptic speeches by administration officials, including, preeminently, President Obama's talk at the National Defense University in 2013.⁹ Partially declassified for that talk was a legal document called the Presidential Policy Guidance, which was not disclosed until August 6, 2016—albeit in

heavily redacted form—pursuant to a federal court order obtained by the ACLU under the Freedom of Information Act.¹⁰ The Policy Guidance and a “Report on Process for Determining Targets of Lethal or Capture Operations” that was issued along with it echo key points in the White Paper, but in their published form they are so extensively censored that the White Paper is still the most substantial of the legal documents released thus far.¹¹

The White Paper was written in 2010 by the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel in order to justify placing the name of a US citizen, Anwar Al-Awlaki, on the government’s secret “kill list.” Although, at the outset, the paper claims to address only the legality of targeting a “senior operational leader of Al Qaeda and its associated forces,” the focus rapidly shifts to include all members of Al Qaeda, as well as anyone suspected of being affiliated with the group. The United States, the paper says, may lawfully deploy its remotely piloted, unmanned aerial vehicles to any foreign geographic location, including to areas that are not recognized as active war zones, in order to track and kill any individual suspected of belonging to Al Qaeda or its “associated forces,” provided that an “informed, high-level government official” determines that the individual poses an “imminent threat of violent attack against the United States,” and that capturing the suspect is “infeasible.”

The paper’s definition of *imminence* is however so broad as to empty the word of its ordinary, functional meaning. As a subsequent ACLU memo observes, “outside of recognized battlefields, the Fourth and Fifth Amendments prohibit the use of lethal force except as a last resort in the face of a concrete, specific, and imminent threat of deadly harm.”¹² The ACLU’s complaint derives from certain settled principles within International Humanitarian Law and modern International Human Rights Law. In an international armed conflict, or war between states, the armed forces of the states that are party to the conflict can lawfully target one another, and may even target civilians if, and only for such time as, they directly participate in hostilities.¹³ In a non-international armed conflict, or war between a state and a non-state actor, the state may target only the organized armed forces of the non-state party to the conflict. Here too, civilians participating in hostilities in a “spontaneous, sporadic or unorganized way” lose their protection against direct attack if, and only for as long as, they carry out hostile acts. Moreover, civilians belonging to an organized armed group are considered to have assumed a “continuous combat function,” and therefore lose their legal immunity from attack for the duration of their membership in the group.¹⁴ This exception to the rule of noncombatant immunity (or, to put it another way, this shift from civilian to combatant status) is, however, legitimately available only in the context of non-international and, *mutatis mutandis*, international armed conflicts. Outside of an officially declared war zone, everyone is a civilian; and the right to life recognized in the United States Constitution as well as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has been interpreted to prohibit the use of lethal force against civilians except in those very limited circumstances where they present “an imminent threat to human life that cannot be otherwise ameliorated.”¹⁵

In light of the last of these provisions, the frequent government and media references to “combatants” and “militants” lack legal foundation, insofar as the alleged adversaries are not party to a legally recognized armed conflict with the United States. Similarly groundless is the Bush administration’s labeling of Al Qaeda suspects as “unlawful enemy combatants.” Once they are deprived of the rights or protections normally afforded combatants under international law, these suspects become civilians, not some less-than-human form of “bare life.” As civilians, they are, under human rights law and the law of armed conflict, liable to attack only at and for “such time as they take a direct part in

hostilities.”¹⁶ In this context, it is worth noting—particularly since the White Paper was initially drafted to help inculpate him—that it has never publicly been established that the “radical Muslim cleric” Anwar Al-Awlaki ever assumed an “operational” role within Al Qaeda. While his sermons likely inspired many so-called jihadists, there is no extant evidence suggesting that he ever assumed a function equivalent to that of a terrorist or a traditional combatant. Neither his association with Al Qaeda nor his role as a spiritual motivator of anti-American sentiment were sufficient cause for depriving him of his civilian status and waiving the strict requirement of imminent deadly harm.¹⁷

Instead of offering evidence of a concrete and impending threat, whether from Al-Awlaki or from any other alleged “terrorist,” “militant,” or “combatant,” the Justice Department’s memo refers repeatedly to the inherent dangerousness of individuals who may be engaged in what it nebulously refers to as “continual planning” and “constant plotting” against American persons and interests, bluntly asserting that the United States is *not* required to have “clear evidence that a specific attack . . . will take place in the immediate future” before using deadly force to defend itself against its suspected enemies. Is the charge of “continual planning” an oblique invocation of the “continuous combat function” (mentioned above) of organized armed groups participating in a non-international armed conflict? If so, the reference is misplaced with respect to non-imminent threats occurring outside of an officially declared war zone. But whatever that particular wording’s intended legal connotation, the memo’s basic message manages to be at once dangerously vague and starkly unequivocal: if an individual is identified in secret, by anonymous government sources, as possibly being involved, in some general way, in plotting attacks against the United States, the accused individual may be killed without warning, at any time and any place, “even if there is no specific evidence of where such an attack will take place or of the precise nature of the attack.”¹⁸

In its positing of false dilemmas and worse-case scenarios, and in its failure to demonstrate directly and convincingly the applicability of the just war principles to which it appeals, the White Paper is uncannily reminiscent of the torture memos of the George W. Bush presidency.¹⁹ The drone memo briefly invokes the principles of necessity, distinction, proportionality, and humanity (the avoidance of excessive civilian casualties or “unnecessary suffering”), but the only of these issues it addresses at length is that of necessity, which it frames very broadly in terms of, first, the President’s constitutional responsibility to protect the nation, and second, the sovereign right to self-defense under UN Charter’s article 51. Such language would appear to bring the drone program under the legal umbrella of *pre-emptive* military action against an imminent or proximate threat, in accordance with a long established exception to the UN Charter’s general restriction of the legitimate use of self-defensive force to the deflection of an actually occurring armed attack.²⁰ But the picture that emerges from the memo is instead that of a scattershot program of killing that is neither preemptive nor preventive in any accepted legal sense.²¹ The claim to self-defense is substantiated only by appeals to an amorphous definition of *imminence*, by an implausibly capacious reading of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, and by threadbare arguments from “analogous contexts” (e.g., the laws of war pertaining to detention, or interpretations of “probable cause” in domestic law enforcement).

The Authorization for Use of Military Force is limited in application to those “nations, organizations, or persons” who the president determines had “planned, authorized, committed, or aided” the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or who had harbored the individuals or organizations responsible for those attacks.²² As an ACLU memo observes, “Congress did not intend the AUMF to be a ‘blank check’ for the use of lethal force without geographic or temporal constraints, or for the use of lethal force against

actors who have no substantial connection to the September 2001 attacks.”²³ The restrictiveness of the Authorization was clarified by Congress’ rejection of an earlier version of the bill, which would have licensed George W. Bush to use lethal force to “deter and pre-empt *any* future acts of terrorism or aggression against the United States.”²⁴ Thus, to fall within the Authorization’s ambit, a group must directly have engaged in conduct leading to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Yet, what government officials refer to as an “Al Qaeda core” no longer exists, and the groups that are currently targeted under the ill-defined rubric of “associated forces” (the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Somalia’s al-Shabaab) were founded well after the enactment of the Authorization to Use Military Force.²⁵ Despite adopting the “Al Qaeda” brand name and sharing a general ideological affinity descending from the early Al Qaeda, these groups are for the most part neither intent on nor capable of attacking the United States; they are instead preoccupied with domestic civil wars or regional insurgencies.

The local, scattered, and loosely organized nature of these and numerous other nominal Al Qaeda “branches,” “franchises,” or “affiliates” constitutes yet another impediment to the legitimacy of the United States’ targeting of them. For the United States cannot legally consider itself to be party to a non-international armed conflict (whether or not it in fact does so has never been clarified) if its non-state adversary is not a clearly identified fighting force with a central command and control structure, and if hostilities between that actor and the US have not attained a threshold of duration and intensity exceeding merely sporadic acts of violence. Elucidating the foregoing criteria as set forth in an opinion paper of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Daphne Eviatar concludes,

The scattered nature of these groups, the fact that almost none of them is targeting the United States, and the apparent lack of any command structure linking them weigh strongly against the United States being able to treat them, for the purposes of international law, as an enemy actor, either separately or united, against which the United States is engaged in an armed conflict.²⁶

If neither domestic nor international law can credibly establish the legal existence of an armed conflict between the US and its deterritorialized adversaries, then even the likelihood that Pakistan and Yemen have given the United States tacit permission to conduct some drone strikes on their territory is not sufficient to make those states formal co-belligerents of the US and so does not alleviate the US from the *jus ad bellum* requirements of imminence, necessity, and proportionality.²⁷ Moreover, by withholding formal consent to the drone strikes, Pakistan and Yemen retain their legal status as neutral, third-party states. Belligerent intervention by the United States is therefore a violation of their sovereignty. Some drone proponents claim that the United States can legally take military action against enemy forces on the territory of a neutral state if that state is (as appears to be the case in Pakistan) “unwilling and unable” to prevent the use of its territory to the detriment of the United States. But here again, the “right to self-help” is subject to the requirements of imminence and necessity; a preemptive use of force, it is dispositive only in circumstances where the intervening power can reasonably adduce, in Daniel Webster’s famous phrase, “a necessity of self-defense, instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation.”²⁸

Of course, the primary rationale for extending the drone battlefield beyond hot combat zones is that, to use Mao Tse-tung’s famous phrase, the targeted insurgents behave as fish, seeking shelter and sustenance in the “sea” of local populations. Historically, it is precisely the embedded nature of the enemy that is responsible for the repeated failure of counterinsurgencies. As foreign policy consultant and historian William R. Polk has remarked, “there is no record that counterinsurgency ever worked anywhere, and it is

certainly not working" in the War on Terror. Because military intervention in foreign countries to chase cells of "bad guys" tends to be viewed by the native inhabitants as "unjustified and brutal," it does not matter how many insurgents are killed; new fighters and their supporters will emerge from among the inhabitants.²⁹ This strategic reality is spelled out in the findings of the Stimson Center's bipartisan inquiry into the political ramifications of drone strikes, in comments made by General Stanley McChrystal, and in a leaked internal CIA report.³⁰ According to a report in *The Washington Post*, by 2012, after three years of escalating US drone strikes, the core membership of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had grown from 300 militants to 700 or more.³¹ Evidently, stretching the concept of the enemy beyond traditional bounds to include guerillas who may have blended with the civilian population and infrastructure in undeclared fields of conflict does nothing to break the cycle of violence; rather, it raises a host of legal and ethical problems around the traditional concept of collateral damage. Constitutional scholar Owen Fiss succinctly summarizes the pertinent uncertainties as well as the legal and moral prohibitions to which those uncertainties *should* give rise:

Even if there is no doubt as to whether the target is a leader of a terrorist organization, there may be doubt as to whether capture is feasible, or whether the lethal attack might be deferred until a later date when the killing of civilians would be avoided, or whether the terrorist organization is a co-belligerent of al-Qaeda, or whether the nation in which the suspected terrorist is located has relinquished its claim to sovereignty. These uncertainties seem inevitable and are significantly greater than those associated with the killings that invariably take place in a combat zone or an active theater of armed conflict. As a consequence, the advantage to be gained by killing a suspected terrorist is, as a matter of morality and legality, too slender to shoulder the ensured killing of civilians, under the theory that such killings would be nothing more than collateral damage.³²

Functioning in tandem with what John Brennan, Obama's counterterrorism chief at the time, called a "flexible understanding of 'imminence'"—that is, again, the notion that the United States can kill its putative enemies without having clear evidence that they are engaged, or are about to engage, in an armed attack against the United States—is the easily manipulated concept of feasibility, where, as mentioned above, the infeasibility of capture is put forth as grounds for opting to assassinate, rather than to apprehend, interrogate, and try in a court of law, suspected terrorists.³³ Outside of conventional battlefields, international human rights law permits the use of lethal force against an imminent threat only when there is no other available means of self-defense, such as diplomatic efforts, non-lethal incapacitation, or capture. Yet, as Daniel Klaidman reveals in his chronicle of the assassination of Osama bin Laden, Obama and his advisers routinely take the position that capture is infeasible, having found that "killing is a lot easier than capturing"³⁴—"easier" for reasons such as Republican opposition to Federal criminal trials for terrorism suspects; the possibility that the "host" country might refuse to consent to a capture operation; the political sensitivity of putting American boots on foreign soil; and the United States' reluctance to expose its soldiers to the physical risks of ground operations. Thus, political expediency overrides not only international law but also the Fifth Amendment, with its guarantee of due process and protections against being erroneously deprived of one's life. Like the majority of the prisoners at Guantanamo, but with consequences that are irrevocable, the accused are given no opportunity to defend themselves against flawed intelligence, equipment failure, software glitches, or human error; nor are they ever given the opportunity to surrender. They are judged, convicted, and summarily executed on the basis of secret determinations made by government officials acting unilaterally, with no legal checks or adversarial testing and no sustained,

independent oversight, whether from other branches of the government, the press, or the public.

Necro-Statistics

On July 1, 2016, in a belated bid to project transparency and to defend publicly the alleged legitimacy of the assassination campaign, the Obama administration released its assessment of the number of civilians killed in drone and other “counterterrorism” air strikes in areas outside of “active hostilities” (specifically, in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen) between January 2009 and December 2015. The published figures were met by a wave of skepticism in the US, not only from civil rights groups but also from mainstream news outlets, which noted that the estimates covered only a limited range of time and excluded civilian casualties occurring in ground operations as well as in the declared war zones of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria (areas where the civilian death toll is likely to be considerable).³⁵ Moreover, the government’s report provides statistics for the inclusive seven-year period in the aggregate only, instead of offering a breakdown by year, or by location, or by each particular strike. This lack of specificity makes the totals at once unverifiable and implausible by comparison with the much higher tallies published by independent organizations, whose incident-by-incident data is compiled not only from local and international news sources but also from leaked government documents, court papers, and field investigations involving extensive interviews with witnesses, survivors, relatives, and foreign officials.³⁶

The government’s release of noncombatant casualty figures was accompanied by an “Executive Order” intended to codify targeted-killing guidelines for the use of future administrations, and to serve as a template for “foreign partners” who might be developing or already deploying advanced drone technology for similar purposes.³⁷ The document states that “relevant departments and agencies” shall “take feasible precautions in conducting attacks to reduce the likelihood of civilian casualties,” a notably weaker and vaguer standard than the “near-certainty” articulated both in the Presidential Policy Guidance and in Obama’s speech at the National Defense University (“before any strike is taken, there must be near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured”).³⁸ The Order also authorizes the office of the Director of National Intelligence to “publicly release” an annual summary of “unclassified” information pertaining to combatant and noncombatant deaths occurring outside areas of active hostilities, and it requires that the US government “acknowledge … responsibility for civilian casualties and offer condolences, including *ex gratia* payments, to civilians who are injured or to the families of civilians who are killed.” Such apparent good will is undermined, however, by the opacity and the dubiousness of the statistics accompanying the Executive Order, by the government’s past record of refusing to acknowledge or to apologize for erroneous air strikes (the sole exception being a 2015 strike that accidentally killed two Westerners), by leaked evidence of US attempts to hide its responsibility for civilian deaths resulting from specific strikes, and by clear instances of government propaganda, such as John Brennan and the CIA’s concerted claim, in 2011, that not a single noncombatant had died in the many hundreds of lethal drone strikes of the preceding year.³⁹

What is perhaps most troubling about President Obama’s outline of the goals and procedures allegedly governing drone strikes is its implicit acknowledgement that the government itself is often ignorant of the identities of those whom it has killed, a fact that is suggested by the Executive Order’s promise that US defense and intelligence agencies will consult periodically with “nongovernmental sources” and with “partner governments” to address any discrepancies between their post-strike assessments and its own, and to update regularly its estimate of “civilian casualty trends” in the light of new information gleaned from ongoing investigations. Indeed, both the reliability of the recently released

statistical data and the candor of the accompanying policy statement's professions of respect for the rule of law were put into question by the administration's concurrent confirmation that the institutionalized guesswork of what it calls "signature strikes" was nonetheless expected to continue. Although the laws of war stipulate that, in cases of doubt as to whether persons in a war zone are civilians or combatants, they are to be considered civilians,⁴⁰ drone operators routinely carry out attacks against gatherings of unknown people, based solely on their putatively suspicious patterns of life (their behavioral "signature"). More inexplicably still, the unmanned aircraft also perform "double-tap" strikes, in which a second drone attack indiscriminately kills anyone—including bystanders and professional humanitarian workers—seeking to bring aid to the victims of the initial strike. Rather than acknowledge the enormous collateral toll of these literally blind deployments of military force, the Obama administration reportedly counts any unidentified male of military age who dies as a direct result of an American drone strike as an "enemy killed in action" (EKIA)—unless "intelligence" (from unspecified sources) should happen to prove his innocence posthumously.⁴¹ When one considers the generous latitude that the government has granted itself for making fatal errors—errors that arise quite foreseeably from the arbitrariness of targeting methods based on statistical probability and reductive behavioral modeling, the unreliability of much intelligence, the limited precision of drone imaging technology, and the referential vagueness of "Al Qaeda and associated forces"—it is perhaps not surprising that, as we saw in the previous section, the vast majority of people targeted by US drones have turned out to be not the "high-value" masterminds alleged by the Pentagon but either civilians mistaken for combatants or else anonymous low-level "militants" who, while perhaps ideologically sympathetic to Al Qaeda, had neither the means nor the access to pose a serious threat to the US, and who were engaged in tribal conflicts or local insurgencies against their own government—not in plotting terror against the United States. Furthermore, as we have seen, the evidence suggests that rather than "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat" these armed groups,⁴² the drone strikes have facilitated recruitment to their cause, and have motivated an increasing number of attacks by militants in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, and North Africa.⁴³

Echoing verbatim the key terms of the White Paper, the Executive Order invokes the "fundamental principles of necessity, humanity, distinction, and proportionality," and affirms as well the administration's "heightened policy standards" for the protection of "vulnerable populations." Yet civilian casualties, it says, are "a tragic and at times unavoidable consequence of the use of force in situations of armed conflict or in the exercise of the state's inherent right of self-defense." While the White Paper and the policy statement both present civilian deaths as necessary, unintentional, and secondary in relation to the legitimate "mission objectives" of the state, those deaths are of course the primary motivation (the "necessity") behind the government's cryptic legal pronouncements and its release of data, both of which represent "preemptive" maneuvers in "self-defense" against "imminent" accusations of highhandedness. And indeed, given the geographic remoteness of the drone "battlefields," the ethnic and cultural remoteness of the peoples who inhabit them, and the immunity of the Pentagon's joystick warriors to the physical risks traditionally associated with engagement in military combat, frequent and detailed news reports about noncombatant deaths would seem to be the single factor most likely to overcome the American public's general mood of apathy toward the drone program's (mostly foreign) casualties, and to focus attention on the relevant issues of secrecy, constitutionality, and international law. But despite the periodic appearance of critical newspaper and magazine articles in the mainstream press, protests by human rights organizations, and a spate of trade books about drones and targeted killing, the matter of civilian casualties has not received the kind of sustained reportage and analysis

that might erode public support for the policy. On the contrary, recent polls suggest that the great majority of Americans are persuaded of the necessity and the effectiveness of targeting suspected terrorists, and remain unperturbed by news of the ugly “side-effects” of the air strikes.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, this relatively inexpensive and risk-free tactic enjoys broad, bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, where Democrats and Republicans alike appear unmotivated, politically, to subject the program to scrutiny or to meaningful oversight.

The Duplicity of Double Effect

What this general attitude of complacency suggests, among other things, is that the whole debate over collateral-death statistics is fundamentally misplaced. For it automatically situates the conversation about the relative worth of legally innocent (foreign) lives within the utilitarian framework of the lesser-evil arguments that I discussed at the beginning of this essay. The set of criteria that, since its origins in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, traditionally has been invoked to justify lesser-evil exceptions to ordinarily inviolable ethical norms is known in philosophical discourse as *the law of double effect*. The main tenets of the double effect principle may be summarized briefly as follows: in certain situations it may be necessary and therefore permissible to cause harm in order to achieve a greater good, provided that the harm is neither an end in itself nor the direct and intentional means for achieving the good effect, and provided that the intended good effect of the harmful act outweighs its bad effects.⁴⁵ In military ethics, this precept has been taken to mean that it is morally permissible to kill civilian noncombatants provided that their deaths are a foreseeable but unintentional effect of a legitimate military action. Related requirements, codified in the laws of war, are that due diligence must be exercised to minimize harm to civilians, and that the number of civilian and combatant casualties should not be “excessive,” but rather “proportional,” in relation to the threat that the action repels or to the military advantage it aims to accomplish.

Proportionality is a useful concept in international law when what is reciprocally weighed—what is determined to exist in a state of relative equilibrium or disequilibrium—is the kind and the amount of force used by the opponents, the kind and the amount of architectural or environmental damage they inflict on one another, or the kind (combatant or noncombatant) and the number of casualties they may suffer. It is another matter, however, to estimate the value of a certain number of civilian lives relative to a concept, or a value, so subjective as an anticipated military gain. Between these two fundamentally unlike variables there exists no objective ground for comparison, no common standard of measure on the basis of which to establish moral equivalence or discrepancy. Moreover, as I have said, the variables that are to be quantified, weighed, and translated into an ethical hierarchy may be not only incommensurable but also unpredictable. The immediate effects and long-term consequences of any particular act of violence—the nature or the extent of the “greater good” it will accomplish, of the “greater evil” it will avert, or of the “lesser evil” it will incur along the way—cannot be fully foreseen, measured, or controlled by military, government, and intelligence personnel.

These problems are of course only compounded by the secrecy and the legal uncertainty surrounding the United States' use of killer drones in foreign wars that are and are not wars, over battlefields that are and are not battlefields, against a vaguely defined enemy, for military and strategic ends that are largely hypothetical. For any given drone strike, or series of strikes, what, we might ask, is the ethically satisfactory ratio, the rate of exchange, between noncombatant lives and the anticipated military advantage for which they may be sacrificed? In US Special Operations airstrikes between January 2012 and February 2013, 35 of the 200 people killed were intended targets, and, during one five-month period of the same campaign (“Operation Haymaker”), nearly 90 percent of the people killed were not the ones intended.⁴⁶ Between November 2002 and November

2014, in Yemen and Pakistan, repeated and often unsuccessful attempts to kill 41 specifically targeted men resulted in the estimated death of 1,147 people.⁴⁷ If these figures seem somehow “excessive,” or “disproportional,” then is the government’s tally—between 64 and 116 noncombatant casualties in 473 air strikes that are said to have killed from 2,372 to 2,581 combatants in undeclared battlefields since 2009—safely within the bounds of moral permissibility?

If proportionality depends, as would seem to be the case, as much on the quantification of value as on the valuation of quantity, should the combatant to noncombatant ratio not be adjusted (sometimes it is) for a “high-value target” as opposed to a “low-level militant”? Under the general rubric of “civilian casualties,” shouldn’t there be subcategories to which greater or lesser weight may be assigned? Pondering the mysteries of collateral proportionality, an Israeli military lawyer asks, in all seriousness, “How do you count women in relation to men? How do you count the death of children? Does one dead child equal one dead grownup, or does he equal five dead grownups?”⁴⁸ Taking the implications of this computational logic a step further, shouldn’t we assign different numerical values to different civilians’ lives based not only on their age and sex but also (in deference to President Trump’s worldview) on their social status, ethnic identity, or religious affiliation? What about a “casualty’s” overall intelligence or attractiveness, health, or disability? Shall we consider as well his or her indispensability to the financial resources of a particular household, or to the political stability of his or her local community?

In the end, none of these metric refinements would help us to come up with a universally or even broadly consensual evaluative framework for ethically measuring the statistical probability of a certain “cost” in civilian life against the largely unknowable military, strategic, or humanitarian “benefit” to be derived from the violence unleashed in its name. How much, and what kind of, “good” results from the targeted assassination of a person who is suspected of belonging to a group that is believed to be affiliated with—or merely sympathetic to—Al Qaeda or ISIS, whose members may be, or may someday become, involved in plotting unfathomable harms to American interests?⁴⁹ Lesser-evil humanitarianism would require some concrete knowledge of how many American lives this particular suspect’s death is likely to save, and would dictate that we compare that figure with the number of civilian lives likely to be lost in the strike or strikes that ultimately eradicate him. But even if we could magically produce such information with accuracy, that would not resolve the ethical aporia produced by our attempt to apply a mathematical balancing test to the inherent value of human lives. And further unknowns would abide. What immediate military advantage would this individual’s death bring about? If he is indeed a high-level militant, does killing him throw the terrorist network to which he belongs into a state of panic, paralysis, or general disarray; or does another leader simply rise to take his place, accompanied by new fighters effortlessly recruited from among the victim’s friends, family, or tribe? What long-term *casus belli* is served by targeting him and at the same time inadvertently killing bystanders? Is the War on Terror thereby closer to being won?

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that lesser-evil calculations can and do yield acceptable ethical guidelines. If, as a result, we Americans are indeed safer now than we were before the armed drones came to our rescue, then should our government not be willing and able to explain to us, in empirical terms, just how much safer we actually are, and to demonstrate to other countries as well that its transnational program of targeted killing sufficiently advances the interests and the security not only of the US, but also of the global community, to justify the life-risks it levies on civilians? My point here is not that we should embrace lesser-evil humanitarianism, but simply that, having opted for a lesser-evil interpretation of international law, the United States has, in the course of its

drone campaign, failed to make a sincere effort to apply such a framework. Since those standards have been formally adopted by the US, both law and morality demand not that they be invoked vaguely or tendentiously, but that they be formulated and adhered to as rigorously as possible. On the evidence thus far, however, and within the parameters of the legal humanitarianism that it professes, the government-intelligence nexus is capable of exercising far greater caution and producing far greater empirical certainty than it in fact does. This does not mean that, by increasing our margin of “due care” (and hence reducing somewhat the number of innocents killed), we would thereby be relieved of the ethical burden posed by the hyper-positivistic assumptions and the inevitable empirical indeterminacies of a “humanitarian” necro-calculus. It means only that the US has the responsibility, within the just-war framework it claims to respect, to produce a much higher level of predictability and verifiability for its kill ratios and collateral damage estimates. A greater degree of certainty in this regard, while constituting a lesser evil, would not however eliminate the pitfalls of incommensurability and error, nor would it escape the moral challenge raised by the civilian casualties for which it allows. At the same time, in keeping with the principle of necessity at the level of *jus ad bellum*, we need to ask ourselves if the freedoms and the core values of the world’s sole remaining superpower could truly be so fragile, so permanently subject to “imminent” destruction, that innocent strangers a world away must continue to die for them. We certainly do not ask the civilian who is about to become a statistic what he thinks the relative value of his life ought to be on the American market of political ideas. Yet it is not at all obvious that he does not have an inherent right not to be killed, or not to be exposed to the risk of being killed, for ends that he himself has not freely chosen.

Despite the hermeneutic room for maneuver afforded by the fog surrounding double-effect calculations of proportionality in cases where fundamentally incommensurable variables are mathematically converted and compared, government lawyers, as we have seen, have been unable to make a sound case for the practice of targeted killing other than by hiding or distorting certain facts and by bending legal principles beyond recognition. I have noted in particular the casual conflation of local insurgencies with global terrorism, the failure to investigate compelling testimony and material evidence, the refusal to define *feasibility*, and the subtraction from *imminence* of precisely those semantic components (urgency, necessity, and last resort) that give the term its distinctive meaning as a legal trigger for defensive military action. Had government lawyers undertaken instead to perform a “close reading” of the pertinent conceptual binaries—to locate the “in-between” of, say, imminence and latency, or feasibility and infeasibility, or proportionality and excess—the adopted critical methodology would have required that they formulate subtle distinctions and precise definitions grounded not only in reasoned inferences from juridical intertexts but also in the analysis of material evidence and empirical contexts. The endpoint of such an exercise would be the provisional (re)construction of meaning, of a precisely circumscribed semantic field derived from, and subject to, both legal and public consensus. In the administration’s rhetoric, on the contrary, discipline-specific terms of art are made to signify whatever is asked of them, independently of the normal constraints of both semantics and pragmatics. Too often, moreover, the connection between the new, idiosyncratic sense (or non-sense) and any corroborating situational reality is either unilaterally asserted or else obscurely implied, rather than being extrapolated from verifiable facts, in accordance with transparent and inclusive procedures of deliberation.

The Alibi of Intention

Before concluding my reading of the Obama administration’s reiterated claim that its remotely guided executions are conducted in a manner fully consistent with the

“fundamental principles” of the international laws of war, I would like briefly to consider the legal ramifications of the intentionality clause of the double effect rule. Again, double effect stipulates that it may be necessary to cause harm in order to achieve a greater good, provided that the harm is not the *direct and intentional means* for achieving the good effect, and provided that the intended good effect of the harmful act outweighs its bad effects. Correspondingly, in the definition of proportionality as a legal principle, the legitimacy of trading civilian lives for military gain is contingent on the actor’s intentions regarding the foreseeable outcomes of an attack: under the Statute of the International Criminal Court, it is a war crime “intentionally” to launch an attack “in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects . . . which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated.”⁵⁰ Indeed, in order to distinguish between terrorism—definitions of which generally stipulate the *deliberate* use of violence, or of the threat of violence, against civilians for the purpose of achieving political objectives⁵¹—and collateral casualties, we need to be able to tell the difference between what an agent “directly intends” and what he or she “foresees” as an incidental, accidental, and unavoidable by-product of violence that is intended to bring about a legitimate military goal.

The first and most obvious obstacle to establishing the nature of an agent’s intentions is that we have no way of gaining direct access to subjective states of mind. Proving another’s intention or lack of intention with regard to the commission of a specific act requires making logical inferences from external signs regarding motives that are by no means necessarily logical, and whose origins may be to varying degrees conscious or unconscious. Determining legal and moral responsibility for the civilian casualties of drone strikes is further complicated by the various ways in which the new weapons technology, as well as its means of implementation, tend to obscure accountability by spreading it among multiple agents, both human and nonhuman. For example, drone missions and their pilots generally fall under two chains of command, one located in the U.S. and the other in the distant “battlefield.” When a mistake is made, the pilot could be at fault, but so could either of the commanding officers. And it is often unclear which command chain has the greater authority, hence responsibility, for the outcome of a particular strike. Moreover we may not know exactly who, using what computer algorithm and what kind of data, may have been involved in making pre-strike collateral risk assessments; or who—which “informed, high-level government official”—may ultimately have been responsible for deciding that the planned strike qualified as a “necessary” and “proportional” response to an “imminent” danger. Consider also that the weapon’s targeting programmer may inadvertently have entered the wrong coordinates; the intelligence may have been flawed; or the on-screen images and icons might have been in some crucial way either ambiguous or misleading. Perhaps there was a bug in the software; perhaps the system was improperly designed. Should, then, a programmer or an engineer be held responsible?⁵²

Errors of this kind may be unintentional, but they still leave open the question of whether the resultant civilian deaths are “clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated” or, for that matter, in relation to the greater good that the war itself is expected to secure. If it is true that drones generally can be more discriminating than either manned aircraft or ground troops, then it is only fair to ask why so many civilian casualties seem “unavoidably” to result from the use of this exceptionally precise technology. Are the significant civilian death counts indicative of a certain recklessness in the execution of the strikes, or of negligence at some stage in the decision-making process leading up to them? If instead we assume that, in the course of most drone sorties, the precautions taken to protect civilian life are successful in yielding no more

than an anticipated and proportionally scaled number of unintended casualties, does the military advantage procured by these missions still outweigh the “unavoidable” lesser evil of killing the *maximum* permissible number of civilians—especially when we dispose of both the technology and the know-how to kill far fewer innocents than we actually do? How unintentional, then, are those supposedly proportional deaths? In such circumstances, is the indirect and unintentional—but also foreseeable—evil of slaying and maiming civilians really *morally* distinguishable from the direct, purposive, and “necessary” means (the resort to lethal force) from which it is *practically* inseparable?

In questioning the fault-line between foreseeability and intention, I am not primarily concerned with the relative morality or legality of sporadic errors occurring within an otherwise controlled humanitarian necro-economy; nor am I particularly interested in discovering and evaluating specific casualty estimates, or the formulae for calibrating them, in classified “collateral damage forecasts.” I am concerned, more broadly, with the targeted-assassination practices that are a matter of national policy, and that therefore cannot properly be called unintentional. These include assassinations authorized on the basis of often unreliable cellphone metadata; the arbitrary and indiscriminate use of double-tap strikes; and the inference of guilt (including necessity and imminence) from suspected ideological affinities or pattern-of-life analyses. The laxness of such methods, and the enormous risks that they pose for noncombatant populations, are fully understood by those who implement them. To the extent, then, that the “accidental” civilian deaths incurred by these inherently imprecise military and political practices are not the result of an *unintentional* failure to foresee harmful consequences that might reasonably have been foreseen and avoided, but rather of the deliberate and systematic application of practices that are known to comport an unusually high risk of error, these practices cannot be characterized as “mere” recklessness or negligence (which are forms of liability not necessarily bound to intentionality).⁵³ The systematization, codification, and institutionalization of scarcely informed best-guessing signals an intention to kill combatants and noncombatants alike, without regard to customary and feasible standards of due caution and discrimination. This does not mean that US operatives necessarily *like* to kill civilians, or that they *want* to kill civilians—only that they are willing to kill civilians in both foreseeable and unforeseeable numbers, for equally foreseeable and unforeseeable ends. They intend to kill more combatants than civilians, of course, but they do not know for certain that that is what they are doing; indeed, the vagueness of their own published statistics suggests that they know very well that that is not what they are doing.

Another significant sense in which the government’s extrajudicial program of targeted killing may be said to flirt with terrorism lies in the direct and foreseeable effect that the sniper planes have on the civilian populations living beneath them—on the men, women, and children who involuntarily witness the carnage of each strike, and who in the aftermath live with the incessant fear of being the next target of what they justifiably see as a merciless and unpredictable killing machine. Let us recall, in this context, that definitions of *terrorism* stipulate the calculated use not only of violence but also of fear, intimidation, or the threat of violence, for political, religious, or ideological ends.⁵⁴ While politically coercive terror is certainly not *the* avowed purpose of the United States’ global network of lethal drones, to pretend that it is not a purpose thereof, and indeed a significant one, is surely disingenuous. It is, in fact, difficult to see how the constant, hovering presence of these weaponized aircraft could *not* be intended as a permanent threat, not only to suspected militants but also to civilian noncombatants who “could” be thinking of aiding the enemy, or of becoming enemy combatants themselves. In addition to the wanton destruction of property and bodies that is attributable to US drone strikes, forensic evidence and the testimony of witnesses have revealed severe psychological and

social harms, including depression, PTSD, and a sharp increase in suicides among persons subject to the unrelenting gaze of the lethal aircraft. In response to the “signature strikes” that have massacred groups of civilians at schools, funeral processions, wedding parties, and meetings of tribal elders, many Afghani and Pakistani parents have removed their children from school, while local inhabitants generally seek safety by avoiding social gatherings altogether.⁵⁵

But we need neither empirical studies nor a sophisticated theory of mind to understand that the indigenous populations living under unremitting panoptic surveillance by military drones must suffer acutely from their unrelieved subjection to the imminent risk of being killed, nor to infer therefrom that, whether they perform their tasks with reluctance or with zeal, the men and women who plan, command, and execute these strikes are implicated perforce in the crime of collective punishment and intimidation.⁵⁶ Since they cannot be unaware that the coercive effects of the unmanned aircraft on policed populations are wholly indiscriminate, drone operators necessarily participate, knowingly and intentionally, in the killing and wounding of “some” despite the traumatic consequences for the “many.” If they neither expect nor wish thereby to create even more enemies for the US, then it is likely, albeit by no means imperative, that they believe that the killings will serve as a lesson, a warning that may deprive the militants of popular support, weaken their resolve, and shift allegiances. Ultimately, however, it does not matter what conscious or unconscious reasoning may have motivated a particular drone-team agent or commander to (intentionally) launch an attack or a series of attacks. It cannot logically and in good faith be maintained that the shock, distress, and paralyzing fear that the attacks, as instruments of a foreign *policy*, inflict on whole communities of defenseless men, women, and children are purely incidental and accidental, much less necessary and proportional. The continued use of this weapon of terror despite its tendency to turn whole populations against the US suggests either that policymakers are too afraid of being perceived as “soft on terrorism” to change a course of action that they know is counterproductive, or that the intended pedagogy of drone violence (the will to control uncooperative peoples by cowing them into submission) is so intuitively commonsensical to the majority of Americans that their belief in its effectiveness will not yield to the geopolitical reality. If, as we have seen, the violence of counterinsurgency is more likely to breed further violence than to bring about peaceful surrender,⁵⁷ then the whole drone campaign may be understood as an egregious psycho-political miscalculation, one that, under the momentum of state, corporate, and techno-military investments, has taken on a life of its own, stubbornly refusing to correct itself even in the face of its evident failure to reduce global terrorism. Perhaps the violent backlash that we are witnessing among those who are condemned to live in the shadow of these menacing aircraft would appear less inexplicable if one day an ally of the US, following the precedent that we have established, were to adopt the same murderous and error-prone technology to hunt its suspected terrorists on American soil, say in a populous city like New York or Los Angeles.

Conclusion

It has been my methodological contention here that theorists and practitioners of ethics and the law can acknowledge that the mimetic effects of language are not always pragmatically or performatively predictable, without thereby renouncing the effort to achieve a viable consensus as to the accuracy of their disciplinary vocabulary, *particularly* in morally uncertain and referentially complex situations. By remaining alert to the specific types of verbal and situational contexts in which this specialized language may incline toward either reductionism or ambiguity, we are in a position better to understand how and why certain ethical concepts become vulnerable to abuse (as does the idea of

intention, when it is characterized either as inherently indecipherable or, at the opposite extreme, as always simple and immediately transparent). We have seen in particular that, when it is bent to the utilitarian ends of the laws of armed conflict—which, we recall, exist not only to deter but also to permit the prosecution of wars—the rule of double effect, despite (or indeed because of) its principles of just cause, right intention, proportionality, and discrimination, can become a mere apology for the rule of double standards. In certain applications, as we have seen, double effect’s “doubleness” becomes duplicity, a rhetoric of sovereign self-exemption from ethical normativity, structured in accordance with the discourse of the fetish: We know that we should not intentionally kill or terrorize civilians, but just the same, we are to be excused for intentionally deploying a tactic that we know will kill some of them and terrorize many of them, for to do so may break the enemy’s will to resist, and in the end might possibly help to save American lives.⁵⁸ We know that it is wrong intentionally to kill and terrorize innocent noncombatants, so we do our best to kill and terrorize them only as much as our soldiers’ safety and our projected military advantage requires, and always in due proportion to the greater good that we anticipate our victory will bring about. Incongruously abstract, speculative, and hyper-positivistic, thinking of this kind underlies the Pentagon’s quasi-mystical belief in the capacity of war games, “human terrain” forecasts, statistical “threat profiling,” and cybernetic models of the “target” culture to transform the messy business of counterinsurgency into an objective, antiseptic, manageable process.⁵⁹ Starting from similar assumptions, legal minds in the government, the military, and the intelligence community set themselves to quantifying good and evil, loss and gain, life and death, as if they were processable units of data, information to be converted by magical algorithms into “humanitarian” reasons for assassinating terrorist suspects, and at the same time for killing and terrorizing civilians.

I said earlier that the whole debate over the relative accuracy of different civilian casualty estimates has been largely misplaced. This is in part because statistics alone, to the extent that they are devoid of narrative, imagistic, and referential “content,” lack moral weight; they invite us to reduce the meaning of each noncombatant’s life to an anonymous unit of exchange that is abstractly equivalent in value to any other within the same general category of “civilian noncombatant,” then morally to evaluate the aggregate of those lives. But in relation to what? The problem is not only that nameless, faceless body counts are unlikely to arouse empathy, or that the flat-toned, journalistic synopses that accompany them mask gruesome and morally discomfiting details. Even if such details should happen to be forthcoming, the question remains: how we are to interpret them; by what ethical standards are we to give meaning to the details? Once a photograph, an article, a newscast, or a blog “fills in” the statistical unit with human substance (with individual character traits, a life story, personal aspirations, and so on), we begin to sense that the human particularity of that life—its moral “weight,” as it were—is beyond measure. Imagined, through an act of empathic identification, in all its uniqueness, and experienced, from the “inside,” as at once uncannily like and irreducibly unlike all that is “me” or “mine,” the intentionally/unintentionally extinguished human life becomes an absolute. It confronts us with the untranscendable distance between the firsthand, first-person experience of tragedy on the one side and the languages of bureaucracy, technocracy, and necro-economics on the other.

This is not to say that we should simply stop (if, indeed, we have truly even begun) keeping careful records of casualty figures; those figures belong to an epistemological context without which it would be impossible to get any kind of ethical conversation off the ground. Rather, it is our moral responsibility, even as we count dead bodies, to recognize the fundamental *nonequivalence* of each human life. If, that is to say, each human life is equal in value to every other human life, it is in the sense that the “other” life is just as precious—just as irreplaceable in the eyes of certain others—as our own life is to us, to our

family, our friends, or our fellow citizens. From this identificatory, or “subjectivist,” standpoint, the difference between ten dead civilians and one hundred, or between one hundred and a thousand, is—like the value of each and every individual—Inherently incalculable. By all means, then, let us count dead bodies, recognizing that, by any empirical ethical calculus, to cause less civilian death is always better than to cause more civilian death. But let us at the same time recognize the futility, indeed the perversity, of quantifying and rationalizing death in an empty economy of means and ends, where means and ends are highly unpredictable and fundamentally irreducible. Holding simultaneously in mind these two irreconcilable but crucial perspectives—the one experiential, the other analytical—we are, I think, less likely to commit the blunder of sacrificing clear legal definitions and deontological moral principles to hubristic and self-defeating political causes.

In his previously mentioned remarks at the National Defense University, President Obama, referring to the contending reports of civilian casualties from drone strikes, offers in passing, in a speech otherwise devoted to an objectivist moral economy, an acknowledgement of the subjective, experiential ontology: “it is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties,” says the president, noting that such deaths are “a risk that exists in every war.” “And,” he continues, “for the families of those civilians, no words or legal construct can justify their loss. For me, and those in my chain of command, those deaths will haunt us as long as we live, just as we are haunted by the civilian casualties that have occurred throughout conventional fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.” The president quickly moves on, however, from his brief confession of private torment over the unjust human toll of “every war.” “But as Commander-in-Chief,” he says, “I must weigh these heartbreaking tragedies against the alternatives.” Thus, as if suddenly rising above an obligatory moment of sentimental self-indulgence, Obama conjures away the “heartbreaking” referent and, returning to the language of “hard facts” and dispassionate calculation, reaffirms the power of elastic “legal constructs” to “weigh” the “risk” of civilian casualties against the somehow foreordained “alternative” of “far more civilian casualties” at the hands of terrorists. By asserting the priority of the hypothetically calculable over the experientially incalculable, President Obama’s words invert the logic of the moral sensibility and lend authority to a regime of legal opacity.⁶⁰

Let us add, by way of a coda, a few observations regarding the military adventurism of Obama’s successor to the White House. With the accession of Donald Trump to the presidency, any hint of compassion, moral conscience, or legal restraint has been superseded by crass bellicosity and self-congratulatory callousness. Trump has pledged to “bomb the shit out of” the Islamic State—“I’d blow up every single inch; there would be nothing left.”⁶¹ In the first counterterrorism operation Trump authorized after taking office, thirty people, including at least eight women and seven children, were killed as US helicopter gunships, Reaper drones, and Special Operations forces launched a dawn raid against “Qaeda militants” in Yemen. Among the dead were two Americans—one, a US Navy SEAL, the other, the eight-year-old daughter of Anwar Al-Awlaki.⁶² In March of 2017, there were approximately forty drone strikes in Yemen, including twenty-five on a single day. And whereas Obama conducted one strike every 5.4 days, Trump averaged one strike or raid every 1.25 days, an increase of 432 per cent over his predecessor.⁶³

In this atmosphere of escalating belligerence, even the modest guidelines of Obama’s Executive Order are being rescinded, as senior officials of the National Security Council conduct a review aimed at lowering the threshold for “acceptable” civilian casualties and at scaling back constraints such as the requirement of a continuing and imminent threat to the US.⁶⁴ In the interest of “streamlining” the decision-making process, moreover, the authority to approve individual drone strikes has been transferred from the White House

to the Pentagon and the CIA, an agency that operates under official secrecy and outside the bounds of the laws of war. Indeed, since the CIA personnel and private contractors who are engaged in staging drone strikes are civilians and, as such, are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, their participation in the deployment of lethal force violates customary international law. Specifically, the 1923 draft Hague air warfare regulations stipulate that belligerent rights may be exercised only by military aircraft bearing external signs of their nationality and of their “military character,” and that these aircraft must be under the command of duly commissioned military personnel and manned by an “exclusively military” crew wearing “a fixed distinctive emblem.”⁶⁵

As civilians participating in hostilities, then, drone operators (including those involved in tactical reconnaissance and intelligence gathering) lose both their immunity from attack and their “combatant’s privilege,” that is, their immunity from domestic laws prohibiting and penalizing the use of lethal force. Accordingly, not only the operators themselves but also the government officials overseeing the drone program are potentially liable to prosecution for murder, both in the US and in the home state of the victim(s).⁶⁶ Even worse, if the US government’s assumption that “unprivileged belligerency constitutes a war crime *per se*” should happen to be correct, then “all those responsible for the CIA program both may be tried by *any* country exercising universal jurisdiction over war crimes and may be prosecuted by military tribunals rather than ordinary civilian courts.”⁶⁷ As Gary Solis puts it, “those C.I.A. agents are, unlike their military counterparts but like the fighters they target, unlawful combatants. No less than their insurgent targets, they are fighters without uniforms or insignia, directly participating in hostilities, employing armed force contrary to the laws and customs of war.”⁶⁸ Thus, by scrapping Obama’s already largely rhetorical “playbook” and shifting the power of life and death toward the least transparent and least accountable of bureaucracies, the Trump administration ensures that we will recognize ourselves in the image of the enemy we seek to destroy.

Notes

1. For an illuminating examination of the tension between “theory” and “rights discourse,” see James Dawes, *The Language of War: Literature and Culture in the U.S. from the Civil War through World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 192–218. 
2. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). 
3. Under *jus in bello* (justice in the conduct of war), the principles of necessity and proportionality apply to specific attacks occurring during a military campaign, weighing the intended and unintended harm that the attack causes to civilians, to non-military objectives, and in certain circumstances to combatants, against the military advantage anticipated as a direct result of the attack. As principles of *jus ad bellum* (justice in going to war), necessity and proportionality (in concert with the axioms of just cause, right intention, legitimate authority, last resort, imminence, and probable success) determines the fundamental legitimacy of a war, and weighs the war’s overall objectives relative to the totality of intentional and unintentional harms (to both military targets and civilians) expected to arise from the war. 
4. Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (New York: Verso, 2011), 6, 4, 10. 
5. For a discussion of the dialectical tension between the endless, asymmetrical War on Terror and cultural memories of the total war of World War II, see Vaheed Ramazani, “Exceptionalism, Metaphor, and Hybrid Warfare,” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 60 (2018): 1–22. 

6. For a comprehensive summary of the crimes of war and crimes against humanity committed by the US during the Iraq War, see the findings and charges set forth in the 2005 “Declaration of the Jury of Conscience at the World Tribunal on Iraq” in *Crimes of War: Iraq*, ed. Richard Falk, Irene Gendzier, & Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 168–179. 
7. For a fuller discussion of President Obama’s mitigated success in discontinuing the unethical practices that were bequeathed to him by the Bush-Cheney administration, see Vaheed Ramazani, “War Fatigue? Selective Compassion and Questionable Ethics in Mainstream Reporting on Afghanistan and Iraq,” *Middle East Critique* 22 (Spring 2013): 5–24. 
8. Quoted by Conor Friedersdorf, “The Obama Administration’s Drone-Strike Dissembling,” *Atlantic*, March 14, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/the-obama-administrations-drone-strike-dissembling/473541/>. 
9. “Department of Justice White Paper: Lawfulness of a Lethal Operation Directed Against a U.S. Citizen who is a Senior Operational Leader of Al Qaida or an Associated Force,” Draft November 8, 2011, <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/doj-lethal.pdf>. “Remarks by the President at the National Defense University,” May 23, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>. 
10. “Procedures for Approving Direct Action Against Terrorist Targets Located Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities,” May 22, 2013, https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/presidential_policy_guidance.pdf. 
11. “Report on Process for Determining Targets of Lethal or Capture Operations,” https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/53-2_exhibit_52 - report_on_process_12.1.15.pdf, accessed June 27, 2018. 
12. “Six Questions for Evaluating a Justice Department Memo Authorizing the Killing of a U.S. Citizen Away from a Battlefield,” https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/140513_drone_memo_final.pdf, accessed June 27, 2018. 
13. See Article 51 of the *Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, of 8 June 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treatyxsp?documentId=D9E6B6264D7723C3C12563CD002D6CE4&action=openDocument>, accessed June 27, 2018. 
14. International Committee of the Red Cross, “Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities in International Humanitarian Law,” <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0990.pdf>, accessed June 27, 2018. 
15. Daphne Eviatar, “Drones and the Law,” in *Preventive Force: Drones, Targeted Killing, and the Transformation of Contemporary Warfare*, ed. Kerstin Fisk and Jennifer M. Ramos (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 173. 
16. Article 51 of the 1977 *Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*. 
17. To these considerations David Glazier adds that Al-Awlaki “should have benefited from specific legal protections accorded religious functionaries” (“The Drone,” in

18. "Department of Justice White Paper." 
19. For an analysis of how the principles of necessity, self-defense, right intention, and legitimate authority have been distorted by the torture memos and by recent advocates of a "responsible" policy of torture, see David Lubin, "Liberalism, Torture, and the Ticking Bomb," in *The Torture Debate in America*, ed. Karen J. Greenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35–83. 
20. See Article 2.4 and Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice,
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>, accessed June 27, 2018. 
21. A threatened state can legitimately take military action in preemptive self-defense "as long as the threatened attack is *imminent*, no other means would deflect it, and the action is proportionate." However, a state cannot claim the right to act in "anticipatory self-defense . . . preventively (against a nonimminent or non-proximate {threat})" unless it has been authorized to do so by the Security Council acting under chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. See "UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2005) {excerpts}," in *Crimes of War: Iraq*, ed. Richard Falk, Irene Gendzier, and Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 48. 
22. Authorization for Use of Military Force,
2001, <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ40/PLAW-107publ40.pdf>. 
23. "Six Questions." 
24. My emphasis, "Six Questions." 
25. For a more detailed description of these groups and their activities, see Daphne Eviatar, "Drones and the Law," in *Preventive Force*, 177–180, and David Glazier, "The Drone," in *Preventive Force*, 146–147. 
26. Daphne Eviatar, "Drones and the Law," in *Preventive Force*, 178. 
27. For fuller discussion of the contradiction between the Pakistani government's public denunciations of US drone strikes and evidence suggesting its silent, or confidential, consent to some of the strikes, see *Opposing Perspectives on the Drone Debate*, ed. Bradley Jay Strawser (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 37–45, 166–170. My following exposition of the legal issues touching on consent and sovereignty is indebted to David Glazier, "The Drone," in *Preventive Force*, 158–161. 
28. *Correspondence between Mr. Webster and Lord Ashburton*, July 27, 1842, https://archive.org/stream/correspondencebe04unit/correspondencebe04unit_djvu.txt. 
29. William R. Polk, letter to author, June 27, 2010. See also William R. Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism, and Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq* (New York: Harper, 2007), 5–6:

Like many observers, I hoped that Vietnam would be the final lesson for Americans that no matter how many soldiers and civilians were killed, how much money was spent, how powerful and sophisticated were the arms employed, foreigners cannot defeat a determined insurgency except by virtual genocide. We came close to genocide in Vietnam—where we dropped more bombs than all the armed forces of the world exploded during the Second World War, poisoned or burned vast tracts of the

country, and killed about two million people. Despite all this, we still lost the war. We did not learn the lesson in Vietnam. We still have not.



30. *Recommendations and Report of The Task Force on U.S. Drone Policy*, Stimson, Second Edition, April 2015, https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/recommendations_and_report_of_the_task_force_on_us_drone_policy_second_edition.pdf; David Wood, "Drone War Expansion Sparks Questions About Effectiveness, Oversight in Obama's Second Team," *The Huffington Post*, January 16, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/16/drone-war-obama_n_2454901.html; *C.I.A. Best Practices in Counterinsurgency*, WikiLeaks Release, December 18, 2014, https://wikileaks.org/cia-hvt-counterinsurgency/WikiLeaks_Secret_CIA_review_of_HVT_Operations.pdf.
31. Sudarsan Raghavan, "In Yemen, U.S. Airstrikes Breed Anger, and Sympathy for Al Qaeda," *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-yemen-us-airstrikes-breed-anger-and-sympathy-for-al-qaeda/2012/05/29/gJQAUmKI0U_story.html.
32. Owen Fiss, *A War Like No Other: The Constitution in a Time of Terror* (New York: The New Press, 2015), 270-271.
33. "Remarks of John O. Brennan, 'Strengthening our Security by Adhering to our Values and Laws,'" September 16, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/16/remarks-john-o-brennan-strengthening-our-security-adhering-our-values-an>.
34. Daniel Klaidman, *Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency* (New York: Mariner Books, 2012), 249.
35. See, for example, "Why the White House Claims on Drone Casualties Remain in Doubt," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/why-the-white-house-claims-on-drone-casualties-remain-in-doubt/2016/07/01/7eb968e8-3c70-11e6-a66f-aa6c1883b6b1_story.html; "White House Releases its Count of Civilian Deaths in Counterterrorism Operations under Obama," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/white-house-releases-its-count-of-civilian-deaths-in-counterterrorism-operations-under-obama/2016/07/01/3196aa1e-3fa2-11e6-80bc-d06711fd2125_story.html; "Drone Strike Statistics Answer Few Questions and Raise Many," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/world/middleeast/drone-strike-statistics-answer-few-questions-and-raise-many.html?r=0>; "Obama Administration Says 64 to 116 Civilians Killed in Drone Strikes, but Rights Groups are Skeptical," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-obama-drone-policy-20160701-snap-story.html>.
36. See "Obama Drone Casualties a Fraction of those Recorded by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism," *Truthout*, July 5, 2016, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/36692-obama-drone-casualty-numbers-a-fraction-of-those-recorded-by-the-bureau>. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence claims that its numbers are more truthful than those of the independent organizations because the latter might be unduly influenced by terrorist propaganda, and because the government's information is based on geospatial video surveillance, communications intercepts, and accounts by "human sources and assets" ("White House Claims," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2016; "White House Releases," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2016).

37. "Executive Order— United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force," July 1, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/01/executive-order-united-states-policy-pre-and-post-strike-measures>. ↗
38. "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." ↗
39. "C.I.A. is Disputed on Civilian Toll in Drone Strikes," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/12/world/asia/12drones.html>. ↗
40. For example, Article 50 (1) of *Protocol Additional*. ↗
41. See "The Assassination Complex: The Drone Papers," *The Intercept*, October 15, 2015, <https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-assassination-complex/>. See also "Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from U.S. Drone Practices in Pakistan," *International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School and the Global Justice Clinic at the New York University School of Law* (2012), 32, <https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Stanford-NYU-Living-Under-Drones.pdf>:

How the US would go about gathering such posthumous evidence is unclear, in part because drone victims' bodies are frequently dismembered, mutilated, and burned beyond recognition. And importantly, there is little evidence that U.S. authorities have engaged in any effort to visit drone strike sites or to investigate the backgrounds of those killed. Indeed, there is little to suggest that the U.S. regularly takes steps even to identify all of those killed or wounded. Consistent with an apparent lack of diligence in discovering the identities of those killed, there is also evidence that the U.S. has tried to undermine individuals and groups that are working to discover more about those killed.



42. *National Security Strategy 2010*, May 27, 2010, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf>. ↗
43. Of the three most widely quoted sources of aggregated data estimating the number of "militants," "militant leaders," and civilians killed in drone strikes each year—The Long War Journal, The New America Foundation, and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism—the most reliable, according to the report released in 2012 by the Stanford International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic and the Global Justice Clinic at the New York University School of Law, is The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The Stanford and New York University study offers case-by-case descriptions of "personality," "signature," and "double-tap" strikes; provides percentages of civilian deaths (as much as 33.3 to 91.2 percent in certain years); describes the lax criteria governing the identification of targets; assesses the social and psychological impact of drone strikes and drone surveillance on communities continually subject to their presence; and examines the legality of the US targeted killing program under both international and US domestic law. It concludes that, in addition to fomenting anti-American sentiment and terrorist activity in Pakistan and throughout the region, US drone strikes set a dangerous precedent for the international proliferation of cross-border violence, as a growing number of state and non-state actors acquire the UAV technology. See "Living Under Drones," 2012.

See also *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/>, accessed June 27, 2018; Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone: An Analysis of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004–2010," February 24, 2010, www.Newamerica.net; *The Long War Journal*, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/>, accessed June 27, 2018; Jane Mayer, "The Predator War," *The New Yorker*, October 6, 2009, 36–45, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/10/26/the-predator-war>; Medea Benjamin, *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control* (New York: Verso, 2013); Ian G. Shaw, "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of U.S. Drone Warfare," *Geopolitics* 18 (2013): 536–559; "The Assassination Complex," *The Intercept*; and Cora Currier, "Drone Strikes Test Legal Ground for War on Terror," *ProPublica*, February 26, 2013, <https://www.propublica.org/article/drone-strikes-test-legal-grounds-for-war-on-terror>. 

44. See the AP-GfK Poll that was conducted May 12–18, 2015, and published on May 28, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/05/28/public-continues-to-back-u-s-drone-attacks/>. See as well the national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, May 12–18, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/files/2015/05/5-28-15-Foreign-Policy-release.pdf>. 
45. For clarifying discussions of the double effect principle, see Mark D. Hauser, *Moral Minds: The Nature of Right and Wrong* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 112–131; Shannon E. French, "Murderers, Not Warriors," in *Terrorism and International Justice*, 31–46; Fiala, *Just War Myth* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 39, 54, 106–108, 110–114; Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 155–156; F. M. Kamm, "Failures of Just War Theory," *Ethics* 114 (July 2004): 650–692; and David Rodin, "Terrorism Without Intention," *Ethics* 114, no. 4 (July 2004): 752–771. 
46. "The Assassination Complex," *The Intercept* 
47. See the report by Reprieve, "You never Die Twice: Multiple Kills in the U.S. Drone program," November 24, 2014, http://www.reprive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014_11_24_PUB-You-Never-Die-Twice-Multiple-Kills-in-the-US-Drone-Program-1.pdf. See also "41 Men Targeted but 1,147 People Killed: U.S. Drone Strikes—The Facts on the Ground," *The Guardian*, November 24, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/24/sp-us-drone-strikes-kill-1147>. 
48. Quoted in Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, 13. 
49. The emergence of ISIS (Islamic State, also known as Daesh) from Al Qaeda was symptomatic of the violent factionalism unleashed by the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, in particular by the destruction of Iraq's existing state institutions; Paul Bremer's de-Baathification program; and the establishment of a sectarian-based political system. Since ISIS did not exist at the time of the September 11 attacks, it does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Authorization to Use Military Force. Nevertheless, US drone strikes are directed against both ISIS and Al Qaeda globally with the exception of in Syria, where the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's "affiliate" in Syria, is the primary recipient of the arms, training, and money that the US and its allies say are intended for the "moderate" rebels of the Free Syrian Army. Thus, the same "terrorists" whom the US assassinates elsewhere in the name of self-defense are in Damascus its main proxy against Bashar Al-Assad. 
50. "Rule 14. Proportionality in Attack," *Customary IHL database*, June 23, 2014, http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule14#Fn_41_7. This is the updated version of the *Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law* conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and originally published by Cambridge University Press. The principle of proportionality as

articulated in Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions also borrows from the law of double effect's particular formulation of the lesser-evil principle. Article 51 (5)(b) of the protocol, which is reiterated in article 57 (2)(a)(iii), prohibits "an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated" (*Protocol Additional*). D

51. See Chomsky, "Terror and Just Response," in *Terrorism and International Justice*, 69: "{A}n official U.S. definition {found in the *U.S. Army Operational Concept for Terrorism Counteraction*, TRADOC Pamphlet No. 525-37, 1984} takes 'terrorism' to be 'the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature . . . through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear.'" Similarly-worded definitions appear in Tomis Kapitan, "The Terrorism of 'Terrorism,'" in *Terrorism and International Justice*, 48, and James P. Sterba, "Terrorism and International Justice," in *Terrorism and International Justice*, 206. Other formulations describe the act of terror as a coercive political message aimed at a particular audience (or "primary target") by way of harm to civilian victims who, despite being the direct recipients of the violence, are only a means (the "secondary target") within the communicative circuit. See, for example, Susan D. Moeller, *Packaging Terrorism: Co-opting the News for Politics and Profit* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 18, and Claudia Card, "Making War on Terrorism in Response to 9/11," in *Terrorism and International Justice*, 173. On the use and abuse of the term *terrorism* for political ends, see John Collins, "Terrorism," in *Collateral Language*, ed. John Collins and Ross Glover (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 155–173; Kapitan, "The Terrorism of 'Terrorism,'" 47–66; Chomsky, "Terror and Just Response," 69–87; Moeller, *Packaging Terrorism*; Edward Said, "The Essential Terrorist," in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, ed. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (New York: Verso, 2001), 149–158; Ileana M. Porras, "On Terrorism," in *After Identity*, ed. Dan Danielsen and Karen Engle (New York: Routledge, 1995), 294–312; Edward S. Herman and Gerry O'Sullivan, *The "Terrorism" Industry: The Experts and Institutions that Shape our View of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989). Regarding the methodological difficulties involved in arriving at a consensus definition, see Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (Oxford: North Holland, 1988); Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.4 (Winter 2004): 777–794; and Andrew Silke, "The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001): 1–14. D
52. For an overview of the kinds of pressure that the rapidly evolving weapons technologies can bring to bear on the laws of armed conflict, see P.W. Singer, *Wired for War* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 382–412. D
53. Recklessness and negligence may include the unintentional failure to foresee the harmful consequences of one's actions in circumstances where one could have been reasonably expected to foresee and avoid the risk of causing such harm. Rodin argues that the concept of terrorism should apply to politically motivated violence against noncombatants that is reckless or negligent, even when it is technically unintentional ("Terrorism Without Intention," 752–771). D
54. See note 51 above. D
55. See Benjamin, *Drone Warfare*, and the report of the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School and the Global Justice Clinic at the New York University School of Law, "Living Under Drones." D
56. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, *Protocol Additional*. D

57. See notes 16, 17, and 43 above. [P](#)

58. See Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 351–355; Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 19 (Oxford: The Hogarth Press, 1953–1973), 248–258; Sigmund Freud, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," in *Standard Edition 23* (1953–1973): 275–278; and Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1989), 89–93. The formulation "I know very well, but just the same" is from Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 9–33. [P](#)

59. Through the Human Social Culture and Behavior Modeling initiative, the US Department of Defense sponsors the collection of demographic and ethnographic "human terrain data" by teams of medical researchers, economists, political scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists working in tandem with Pentagon planners, weapons manufacturers, and military contract corporations to produce virtual models designed to simulate and predict (via highly reductive algorithms) the motives, beliefs, thought processes, and behavior of the human "infrastructure" inhabiting actual or potential "hot spots" in the Middle East and central Asia. Similarly, the US Army's National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California, employs film directors, actors, and special effects technicians for the purpose of developing scripts and scenarios for interactive multimedia computer games as well as for actual role-playing in replicated environments. See Roberto J. González, "Cybernetic Crystal Ball," in *Virtual War and Magical Death: Technologies and Imaginaries for Terror and Killing*, ed. Neil L. Whitehead and Sverker Finström (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2013), 65–84. [P](#)

60. "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." [P](#)

61. Joe Wolverton, II, "Drone Strikes Up 432 Percent Under Donald Trump," *The New American*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/foreign-policy/item/25604-drone-strikes-up-432-percent-under-donald-trump>. [P](#)

62. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Commando Killed in Yemen in Trump's First Counterterrorism Operation," *The New York Times*, January 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/world/middleeast/american-commando-killed-in-yemen-in-trumps-first-counterterror-operation.html?r=0>. [P](#)

63. Joe Wolverton, II, "Drone Strikes Up," *The New American*. [P](#)

64. Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung, "Trump Administration Reviewing Ways to Make It Easier to Launch Drone Strikes," *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-reviewing-ways-to-make-it-easier-to-launch-drone-strikes/2017/03/13/ac39ced0-07f8-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html. [P](#)

65. Quoted in David Glazier, "The Drone," 162. [P](#)

66. See David Glazier, "The Drone," 163. [P](#)

67. David Glazier, "The Drone," 163. [P](#)

68. Gary Solis, "C.I.A. Drone Attacks Produce America's own Unlawful Combatants," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/11/AR2010031103653.html>. See also Medea Benjamin, *Drone Warfare*, 143–144. Solis's use of the term "unlawful combatants" is

inexact with respect to foreign insurgents operating outside of a declared war zone and posing no imminent danger to the US (see section 4 above). The term is however appropriately used in reference to US drone operators, since they are civilians directly and unlawfully engaged in hostilities against suspected militants located outside any recognized battlefield. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Vaheed Ramazani

Vaheed Ramazani is Professor of French at Tulane University, where he holds the Kathryn B. Gore Chair in French Studies. His areas of specialization include nineteenth-century French literature and culture; critical theory; gender studies; film and media; trauma and cultural memory; and international humanitarian law and ethics. He is the author of *The Free Indirect Mode: Flaubert and the Poetics of Irony* (University Press of Virginia) and *Writing in Pain: Literature, History, and the Culture of Denial* (Palgrave Macmillan).



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Allia Ida Griffin, "Troubling the Home/Land in Showtime's *Homeland*: The Ghost of 1979 and the Haunting Presence of Iran in the American Imaginary," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.3>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Troubling the Home/Land in Showtime's *Homeland*: The Ghost of 1979 and the Haunting Presence of Iran in the American Imaginary

Allia Ida Griffin

ABSTRACT In my close reading of the drama series *Homeland*, I illustrate how the divisive pull between "fascination and contempt, desire and disgust" as well as the "simultaneous embracing and disavowal" that cultural critics argue define Iranian Americanness become embodied in the character Fara, a young Muslim Iranian American woman recruited into the CIA for her language and technical skills. This essay asks, among other questions: what does it mean to have anxiety over your birthplace or ancestral homeland? What does a "simultaneous embracing and disavowal" do to a person over time? I argue that as a consequence of how her body is read, Fara is continually denied access to a home and a land and ultimately becomes discarded after performing her role as an agent of the state apparatus. In addition, this essay considers how the ghost of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 is frequently invited to speak as an origins myth for contact between the US and Iran that subsequently shapes the lived realities of Iranian Americans nearly forty years later.

In their introduction to the Summer 2008 issue of *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, Persis Karim and Nasrin Rahimieh contend that

being bombarded with unfavorable and repetitious images of and headlines about Iran and Iranians has reinforced the Iranian American community's anxieties about their national affiliation. The Iranian diaspora's simultaneous embracing and disavowal of its origins is inextricably linked to the political realities of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries and is equally inflected by the community's desire to maintain a double allegiance to both its point of origin and its new home.¹

Similarly, Roshanak Kheshti writes, "Iran occupies a mystified place in the Western cultural imagination, constructed as an object of fascination and contempt, desire and disgust."² In my close reading of the drama series *Homeland*, I illustrate how the divisive pull between "fascination and contempt, desire and disgust" as well as the "simultaneous embracing and disavowal" become embodied in the character Fara, a young Muslim Iranian American woman recruited into the CIA for her language and technical skills.³ This essay asks, among other questions, the following: what does it mean to have anxiety over your birthplace or ancestral homeland? What does a "simultaneous embracing and disavowal" do to a person over time? I argue that as a consequence of how her body is read, Fara is continually denied access to a home and a land and ultimately becomes discarded after performing her role as an agent of the state apparatus.⁴ In addition, this essay considers how the ghost of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 is frequently invited to speak as an origins myth for contact between the US and Iran that subsequently shapes the lived realities of Iranian Americans nearly forty years later.⁵ Lastly, I frame the urgency and relevancy of representation with the language of the Supreme Court

decision on the travel ban that notably targets Iran, among other Muslim-majority countries.⁶

Homeland is an eight-time Emmy Award winning drama series that premiered on Showtime in 2011 and most recently began its seventh season in February 2018. The show was nominated in the “Outstanding Drama Series” category at the Emmy Awards for four consecutive years between 2012 to 2016. Broadly, the first two seasons focus primarily on an ex-Marine’s conversion to Islam during his time in captivity as a prisoner of war, and his subsequent acts of terrorism when he returns to the US. I use the term *subsequent* intentionally here, as his becoming Muslim is directly linked with his terrorist tendencies. The first two seasons observe the moves of terrorist organizations across borders. It is not until the third season that an entire country—specifically Iran—is named as a specific site or locus of terror. And it is in the third season that the series introduces a Muslim Iranian American female character.

While *Homeland* has received scholarly attention, the focus of those scholarly readings largely miss race and tend to be entirely “in relation to class, gender and genre.”⁷ Most notably, in a 2015 special issue of *Cinema Journal*/edited by Diane Negra and Jorie Lagerwey, the editors situate the cultural significance of the series, writing that “upon its debut in 2011, *Homeland* quickly moved to a position of cultural prominence, becoming the kind of program that anchors middle-class taste formations and cultural literacies while earning numerous accolades and drawing record-setting audiences for the cable network.”⁸ The editors further highlight the need for a critical examination of the series because of its pertinence to the present, arguing, “*Homeland* is ultimately a trenchant political melodrama that does not seek to and never can quell the anxieties of the present moment with which it so forcefully engages.”⁹ Within the special issue, Alex Bevan “explores the symbolic position of the single working woman” with a specific focus on the white female character, Carrie.¹⁰ Lindsay Steenberg and Yvonne Tasker argue, “*Homeland* acknowledges and develops this familiar construction of a professional woman whose personal trauma underpins her role as truth seeker and law enforcer” with a similar focus on Carrie.¹¹ Invoking a class-based lens, Stephen Shapiro’s essay asks “How does the American middle class in crisis engage with television to think about its mutable position within capitalist history?”¹² In the issue’s article most critical of the series, James Castonguay articulates, “*Homeland* is a complicit validation of these post-9/11 insecurities that in turn contributes to the public acceptance of arguments in favor of increasing homeland security at the expense of individual rights.”¹³ Castonguay further highlights importantly that “although not all of the Muslims in *Homeland* are terrorists, all of the terrorists are Muslims, including Sergeant Brody, whose Islamic ‘turn’ is represented as a prerequisite to becoming a terrorist.”¹⁴ Though Castonguay is critical of the redundant racist trope placed upon Muslim bodies in the series, his reading focuses broadly on male characters.

It is in this absence that I offer an intersectional and critical race studies approach to explicate six significant scenes in the arc of Fara’s performance that is informed by the theoretical and intellectual contributions of Kimberlé Crenshaw.¹⁵ I examine the way that Fara’s mobility is informed by her race, gender, and visible marker of her faith, as well as the legal and social structures that impact her body. My reading of Fara’s racialization and the impact this has on both her psyche and physical mobility is informed by foundational scholars in African American studies because racialization in the US always occurs within the historical imagination of whiteness and what is defined outside of its margins. As I have written elsewhere, when we think about

gendered and racialized violence against any vulnerable group in America that conversation must draw from the historical specificity of anti-blackness in the US. We cannot talk about the hateful violence as new or post-9/11. Though the circumstances and contexts differ, there is horrific commonality in both the vulnerability of certain bodies and the absence of accountability of white supremacy and anti-blackness. We must address this violence not as distinct or aberrant but as a continuation of what has been occurring to indigenous and black bodies on this soil for centuries.¹⁶

My reading is also informed by the critical scholarship of Iranian, Muslim, and Arab American scholars who have contributed extensively to the study and critique of representations of particular bodies and the legal and social consequences of these representations.¹⁷ I perform close readings of scenes that include her arrival and the terror her presence incites, her attempt to linguistically align herself with the CIA, her untranslated confrontation with an Iranian double-agent, her attempt to distance herself from the CIA that results in an uninvited home visit, a conversation with her father in which she declares herself as American, and her final scene in which the participation of her family still living in Iran is demanded. I focus on these specific moments because they illustrate the peculiar and precarious space that she occupies as both a threat to the state and an agent of the state. Moreover, I argue that her pursuit of being defined as American requires a reciprocal disavowal of her Iranian heritage. Ultimately, her physical presence disrupts her ability to be recognized as American such that after she performs her role, she is discarded.

The third season of *Homeland* begins 58 days after the CIA headquarters are bombed, killing 219 Americans. Prior to her first appearance in the second episode, the audience is introduced to the alleged suspect, Majid Javadi, who is described as “the Iranian who masterminded” what it repeatedly referenced as a “second 9/11.”¹⁸ Through tense and terse dialogue around a conference table, his association with the deadly attack is named as are his previous violent crimes. Shortly after, Fara arrives by taxi with her head turned so that only the back of her hijab is initially visible, and as she steps into the street her body becomes directly juxtaposed with the remains. In her first appearance on screen, her body is aligned with the devastated ruins, and as she looks around at what is left, the looming instrumentals buttress the assumption that her physical presence represents a direct contrast to the mourning that occurs in the wreckage. The haunting presence Iran specifically occupies in the American imaginary, delineated by Kheshti, as the source of both “fascination and contempt, desire and disgust,” becomes mounted onto her body in her first appearance onscreen. As she enters the CIA building the shots focus either exclusively on singular parts of her body, or in the few shots that feature her entire body, she is filmed from high above. The feeling of her being watched is tangible, as is the assumption that she should be watched. As she moves, the camera follows over her shoulder and catches the tense glances of two men passing by. As the camera angle moves upward and then back again to catch the worried glances of even more individuals passing by, the music remains tense, serious, and looming. When she moves through the security gate, with badge lifted in hand, her own awareness of this moment is clear in her body language as two men carefully observe her credentials. Her first moments onscreen establish Fara as a suspicious character in continual contrast with her surroundings. At the same time, the moment of her introduction underscores the suspicion always already placed upon Middle Eastern and Muslim bodies and by extension reveals an expectation from the audience that they will be well versed in this logic.

Scene One

In the second episode of the season and in her first conversation with Saul Berenson, the CIA director and a protagonist that the viewer is meant to associate with, Fara's position as an outsider is verbally enunciated. Saul is the rational character that the viewers are meant to align themselves with because he embodies the ideal spectator. To borrow from Jill Dolan, "the male spectator's position is the point from which the text is most intelligible; the representation constructs the ideal (gendered) spectator at the point of its address."¹⁹ His position as the ideal spectator has long been established through the series as he has operated as the singular trusted and rational mentor of the white female character, Carrie. When Fara's attempts to posit questions about their task results in an eruption, Saul speaks on behalf of the ideal spectator and announces verbally what thus far had been alluded to only through specific gazes and the music. In addition, their conversation is split completely between low-angle and high-angle shots, displaying their extreme difference in status. Saul expounds on the impossibility of perceiving Fara outside of the marker her hijab represents. In response to her initial findings that the terrorist attack did not originate in Iran, his uncharacteristically explosive response reveals a critical tension. He says,

And you know what else, while we are talking about an event that left 219 Americans dead on the ground and what you are doing about it which is apparently nothing. Forgive me. You wearing that thing on your head? It is one big fuck you to the people who would have been your coworkers except they perished in a blast right out there. So if you need to wear it, if you really need to, which is your right, you better be the best analyst that we've ever seen and don't tell me there's nothing.²⁰

Saul's naming of "that thing on [her] head" and the swift alignment he makes between her visual presence and her worth articulates the deficit out of which Fara must climb. Fara must be exceptional, she "better be the best analyst," not because of the severity of the moment but because that is the only explanation for her presence. She cannot just complete her task; she must labor in a way that exceeds the expectation for all others because that will serve as the only rationale for her being in that space. Certainly, much attention and discussion has been focused on the image and symbol of the veil or hijab as it is most often a site of both misreading and Western fetishization.²¹ In the scope of this essay, I want to draw attention to how through the medium of film and in the context of this television show, the hijab arrives before Fara has an opportunity to speak. By this I mean that Saul's fixation on "[her] wearing that thing on [her] head" speaks to Western and white narcissism that sees any deviation as a direct threat.

Saul's reading of the hijab reveals the way in which he posits himself as directly impacted by her personal expression of her faith. In this way, it is always about him first, not her. Moreover, he further announces the suspicion that has already been placed upon her body. I draw from Hortense Spillers's theoretical work on the myriad of terms utilized to name black female bodies as a point of entry for reading the way in which Fara has been marked. Spillers writes,

I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name Embedded in bizarre axiological ground, they demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean. In that regard, the names by which I am called in the public place render an example of signifying property *plus*. In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings.²²

To be nameless and yet always already marked or defined suggests a preemptive presence. To have arrived before arriving or to have one's existence always already noticed without introduction undergirds Spillers's statement and exemplifies the way that Fara is defined. Spillers expounds upon the meanings derived from and carried by one's physicality alone. The "markers so loaded with mythical prepossession" undermine the potential to be seen, understood or read as anything beyond the confined space previously determined by a categorical naming. Although Spillers writes about black female bodies, I invoke her work here because she elaborates on how the ability to live autonomously, or define oneself independently, becomes undermined for certain bodies because their presence always already signifies something else. Though the ideological construction of the black female body in the US imaginary to which Spillers refers comes from the distinct historical context of enslavement, which differs from the Orientalist construction placed upon Fara's body, a non-black Muslim woman, Spillers produces a critical theoretical framework that allows for a grappling with the precise experience of having one's body be predefined by a white supremacist agenda without one's consent. More than that, Spillers articulates how this nonconsensual defining of one's body has severe implications on that body's mobility.

In the following scenes that I include, I argue that Fara is never able to fully "come clean" or "strip down through layers" as even in her usefulness as an agent of the state apparatus, she is never able to move away from the position of suspect. I also situate my analysis of how her body is read through the framework of Khaled Beydoun's critical definition of islamophobia. Beydoun defines islamophobia "as the presumption that Islam is inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable, a presumption driven by the belief that expressions of Muslim identity correlate with a propensity for terrorism."²³ This is further complicated, of course, by her positionality as a visibly Muslim woman who is confronted by the various and specific ways her body is read in public spaces. As Mona El-Ghabashy writes, "the burden of deflecting stereotypes is especially acute for Muslim women at this historical juncture, buffeted as they are by unceasing attempts to 'reform,' 'liberate,' 'uplift,' and 'empower' them by a motley crew of individuals, intuitions, and national governments."²⁴

Scene Two

Following Saul's islamophobic eruption, Fara attempts to prove her worth and presence; first by aligning with the agents in the CIA, and secondly by defining herself as an American capable of grieving for the individuals who were killed in the attack. Her attempt is rebuffed by the all-white and all-male legal team of the bank she is tasked with investigating. The camera angle widens to reveal a conference table with the six men in suits on one side and Saul and Fara on the other. Saul recites a series of bank transactions that involve the Islamic Republic of Iran as Fara silently passes him a piece of paper. It is only when that document is questioned that she speaks. Fara asserts,

You know your bank? It has been trafficking in human misery since the opium war. That is not an aberration, it is not a mistake, that is your business plan. You move money for embargoed governments or phony charities. Where it goes you don't want to know as long as you get your fee. But we're telling you where it went this time: into an SUV full of C4 that blew up right outside this building three months ago. You passed the blast site on your way in. We know the funds moved through your bank, we need to know where they originated.²⁵

One man retorts, doubtfully, "You do?", emphasizing her difference and reminding her of her status. Fara's affirmative response is ignored as the executives leave the room while one retorts as he pushes his chair back and stands to leave: "All respect ma'am. *In this*

country that is not the way we ask for help.”²⁶ His response and their collective exit refuse her ability to mourn for the deceased, and remind her that her physical presence is distinctly marked as un-American.

The conference table and the presence of the suit-clad wall of white representatives of wealth become whiteness personified. At the moment in which their actions are questioned, a quick sleight of hand occurs as they shift focus from their culpability to their definition of her as foreign. A social construct, whiteness and its relationship to power and access become particularly salient in this scene. Michael Eric Dyson defines whiteness as “a highly adaptable and fluid force that stays on top no matter where it lands,”²⁷ and “slick and endlessly inventive. It is most effective when it makes itself invisible, when it appears neutral, human, American.”²⁸ In this particular scene, they are sitting around a table where she has a seat but she is not equal. If, as Dyson writes, “the flow of white identity into American identity” is a function of whiteness,²⁹ then this moment also illustrates what Neda Maghbouleh calls a “racial hinge” in action—closing “the door to whiteness as necessary.”³⁰ It would surprise most to know that though she is clearly racialized at this table, Fara must check “white” on every legal and government-issued document declaring her racial identity. After a series of court cases in the early 1900s, the first immigrants from the Middle East were able to gain citizenship through their status as white that was predicated primarily on their Christianity.³¹ Furthermore, all of Fara’s onscreen experiences illustrate what Maghbouleh calls a “racial loophole” in that her “legal racial categorization is inconsistent with its on-the-ground experience of racialization.” This scene both establishes a personification of whiteness and clearly defines Fara outside of its margins. Considering that this show is called *Homeland*—a direct reference to the Department of Homeland Security—we must ask several questions: what does this scene arouse in an audience and what it is meant to arouse? Is this moment meant to arouse sympathy for her treatment? Or does this moment further define her as an object of perpetual suspicion? Though she has a seat at the table and operates as an agent of the state apparatus, the banker’s quick move to cite his claims to “*this country*” is not a question of her citizenship status but rather a denial of whatever claims she might have as a citizen. In other words, when the man polices her behavior as being at odds with the US, he exhibits precisely what Dyson argues, in that there is a collapse between being white and being American. She is denied the rights of or claims to her citizenship because she will never be white and thus, she will never be American. Put differently, as Beydoun explains, “although Muslim Americans are bona fide citizens, their religious identity induces scrutiny of their citizenship status, patriotism, and belonging.”³² This moment illustrates much about the workings of white supremacy, privilege, and status. To borrow from the theoretical framework established by W.E.B. Du Bois’s double consciousness, what is articulated in this moment is an irreconcilable twoness: “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.”³³ Du Bois writes with critical specificity of the experience of black men in America. Though not written with a Muslim Iranian American woman in mind, his foundational scholarship on the racialized body and psyche offers much when reading this particular rhetoric utilized to reject Fara’s body. Though seated at the table, it is her hijab that speaks more loudly than any demand she can make. Though her labor is in service to the US state, she is kept as an outsider on the margins, made clear through the bank executive’s policing of her behavior as at odds with “*this country*.” Du Bois writes that “it is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”³⁴ To grapple with Fara’s rejection through the framework Du Bois provides allows us to question whether a point exists where she will be ever be perceived as American. Put differently, Du Bois highlights firmly that the issue is with the sight—“the eyes of others”—suggesting that Fara’s physical placement at the

table and the status given to her as an agent of the state are meaningless when measured by the rubric of white supremacy. This further speaks to the frustration regarding the legal categorization versus the lived reality of marginalization and racialization of Iranian Americans that Maghbouleh critically examines in her groundbreaking text *The Limits of Whiteness*.

Scene Three

The fifth episode begins inside Javadi's car, though we do not see his face at first. He approaches a white male border agent adjacent to a sign that reads "Welcome to the United States." Then we see his face as he hands over his passport and speaks in an affected accent. He uses a pseudonym and is granted access into Vermont. When he reappears, it is at a meeting point with an unnamed Iranian American man who switches vehicles with him. The namelessness of the series of Iranian American men who namelessly aide in Javadi's mission says much about the show's shallow representation of Iranian American men. In the sixth episode, Javadi reappears in front of a large, white, and neatly landscaped home with an American flag on display. His American daughter-in-law opens the door and shortly after, he shoots her in the head. As he enters the home, a baby—his grandson Behrooz—cries in the background. His ex-wife, Fariba, enters the scene. In Farsi, he tells her that she made a mistake taking his son from him.³⁵ He breaks a wine bottle and uses it to fatally stab her in the neck over and over again. The scene is described as a "bloodbath."³⁶ It is a gruesome and violent scene that leaves Javadi covered in blood. As these scenes play out, Saul gives Fara an overview of his relationship with Javadi and his role in aiding Fariba's escape with their son from Iran in the aftermath of the revolution of 1979.

The ghost of 1979 is summoned to speak during a brief history lesson Saul compiles for Fara through photographs of the dead. By way of explaining the urgency of their capturing of Javadi, Saul shows Fara a series of photographs that display the murdered, bloody bodies of his victims.³⁷ The bodies Javadi murdered are those that were meant to be saved, to be safely removed from Iran at the moment of revolution because they were deemed an asset to the US. To clarify, Saul is not gesturing to the many bodies that were held in prison, that were executed in Iran before, during, and after the revolution—bodies that Fara would know, and would recognize. The bodies he mourns, and thus values and measures are those that were defined as more American than they were Iranian. Though decades have passed, the extent to which what happened in Iran in 1979 still haunts Saul is evident. As Fara meets Javadi for the first time and declares the economic crimes he has committed in English, he responds in Farsi.³⁸ Fara is seated opposite Javadi with Saul standing in the background. It is very clearly an interrogation room with spotlights lighting an otherwise dark room. She has a binder in front of her with several documents and explains a series of transactions. He ignores her fully, though staring at her, and says in English, "What is your point Saul? That I've been brought down by a girl?"³⁹ He then switches to Farsi and looks squarely at her, saying:

JAVADI: You should be ashamed of yourself. You work for the enemy.

FARA: These people are not the enemy.

JAVADI: So why are you dressed like this? As if this place is Tehran?⁴⁰

Fara briefly responds before Saul interrupts and halts the conversation. This moment specifically illustrates how in an exchange with the only other Iranian (aside from her father), she is named as an enemy. Fara comes to occupy a duality, seen as an enemy by both, equally un-American and un-Iranian. And again here, her gendered physical presence becomes a marker for how she is defined. His immediate critique of her

underscores her gender and the marker her hijab signifies. This moment unfolds as Fara's dual rejection as she is once named as a traitor to the Islamic Republic of Iran and then simultaneously criticized for her choice to wear a hijab—a state-imposed and gendered symbol in Iran—outside of the borders of the country. More than that, his naming of her hijab has a particular significance in Iranian history, as veiling or unveiling has been and currently is imposed by the state's patriarchal power and control. This moment must be read within the specific historical context of Iran as it is not his questioning of her faith, but rather is an attempt to assert control or dominance over her appearance. As a consequence of how "discussions of the veil have more often than not been oversimplified by polemic or reductionism," it is important to note here that a population of women in Iran want to wear a hijab and a population of women in Iran do not want to be forced by the state to wear a hijab.⁴¹ What should always be most critical is that women are at the center of this discussion rather than the state. Moreover, focusing singularly on the hijab ignores the complexity associated with women's lived realities in Iran, and overshadows many other issues such as equity, education, employment, healthcare, and among others. The state apparatus in Iran has made itself central to the determining of whether women can or cannot wear a hijab and Javadi's interjection is read here as drawing from a patriarchal attempt to further have power over Fara's decision. On this specific history within Iran, Farzaneh Milani writes,

An older woman in Iran today has been veiled by tradition in her youth, forcefully unveiled by government edict in 1936, and obligatorily reveiled in 1983. In other words, the actual wearing of the veil has been imposed, withdrawn, and reimposed within a single lifetime. It is hard to imagine a more heavily charged symbol than the veil in the modern history of Iran.⁴²

This becomes embodied in the two male characters seeking to define what her hijab means to them. For Saul, it is "that thing on her head" and his islamophobic gaze that associates her faith with violence. For Javadi, it is why she maintains it outside of the borders of Iran. Both of these interruptions or violent microaggressions undermine and erase Fara's ability to be. The focus is never on her. The focus is always on the marker this represents and how it makes those around her feel.

As for Javadi's switch between languages, it is critical to note that I only have access to this conversation because I understand Farsi. The director made the decision to not translate into subtitles the loud, intense exchange between Fara and Javadi. While I can only guess at the reasons this choice was made, the consequence of the decision to keep this moment foreign achieves a couple of results that are interesting for this discussion. First, to return to the ideal spectator, I am not it. This was not meant for me to see. Secondly, in terms of Fara, it continues to portray her as an object of suspicion, but it also denies her the occasion to speak. In this way, it is not about what is really being said, but rather what it is meant to represent. Iran, and Iranians speaking loudly, become a synecdoche that would and should be recognizable to an audience that does not have access to the translation. This moment triggers a particular cultural memory about Iran, and Iranians speaking loudly.

What this suggests is that any reference to Iran or Iranians speaking loudly in a public space resurfaces for a US audience the ghost of 1979. The ghost is a reminder that haunts. It is to say that Iran is frequently positioned as an enemy of the US. The origin for this dysfunctional relationship is—from the American and Western perspective—the 1979 hostage crisis. For Iranians, it is always about more than this, as their relationship precedes this historical moment. The fact that the CIA-led coup d'état that overthrew democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh is rarely mentioned or

even known by many Americans is evidence of historical erasure that undermines a more complicated or nuanced approach to history. Historian David Farber writes of 1979,

Yet, as measured by public concern, emotional outpouring, and simple fascination, the Iran Hostage crisis captivated the American people more than any other of the era's difficulties. By the millions Americans expressed their ongoing solidarity with the families. They wrote letters of sympathy to the hostages and their families. They wrapped yellow ribbons around trees in their front yards, pinned them on their clothes, tied them to their car antennas as symbols of concern for the hostages' plight. [Through] television talk shows, evening news, drive-time radio, and almost every other forum of public conversation, Americans followed the latest twist and turns of the Americans' captivity in Iran. The nation, itself, was held hostage by the crisis.⁴³

The continued visual exposure to an incident that marked the nation as vulnerable deeply disrupted notions of national superiority and safety held by many. Television figured importantly into the ossifying of this cultural memory as, "night after night, until the 444th night when the hostages were at last freed, Walter Cronkite counted the days of America's humiliation, feeding Americans' angry preoccupation with the Iranian hostage-takers and their captives."⁴⁴

This particular scene questions to what extent this "angry preoccupation" has dissipated. In other words, what happens to an "angry preoccupation" over time? For Iranians who fled Iran in the aftermath of the revolution, or who were already here, as "by the mid-1970s, in fact, there were more foreign students from Iran in American universities than any other national group," this anger became translated onto their physical presence.⁴⁵ As though personally responsible for the act of hostage-taking, Iranians who attempted to create a new home in America discovered in various ways that they were marked as the singular enemy. Farber introduces a metaphor to describe this historical moment on the American psyche, writing, "The hostage-taking was an open wound on the American body politic and the press, politicians, and the American people could not leave it alone."⁴⁶ To describe this moment in history with the metaphor of an open wound is telling and provocative. One could argue that this wound, not properly tended to for the last thirty-nine years, remains infected. There was no resolution to the hostage situation. Certainly, the men and women who endured the unimaginable 444 days in captivity were released and returned to the US. Many of them have written about their experiences. At no point since has Iran been able to come out from underneath this static image. Iran has never shifted from the position of dubious enemy.

How, after nearly forty years, does this event impact the way American's view Iran? Some would say that so much time has passed. Yet, it is worth noting that a large portion of the Americans protesting during the crisis, holding up signs that read "Deport ALL Iranians," were college-aged. Then in their twenties, this generation of Americans, which grew up in and around this display of hate for all from a specific country, is now only in their sixties. In fact, as Iranians represented the largest population of international students on US campuses during this time, the college campus was a site where much of this hatred played out. That generation's attitude is evident through the statistic that "Ten years after the revolution, a Gallup poll determined that the percentage of Americans who had an unfavorable opinion toward Iran increased from 60 percent in 1980 to 91 percent by 1989."⁴⁷ Iranian American children growing up in this decade, when 91 percent of the country had an unfavorable opinion toward Iran, were taught to answer if asked that they were Persian instead of Iranian as a way to side-step the penetration of hate. That atmosphere is illustrated through the media representation of the US attack on and downing of Iran Air Flight 655 on July 3, 1988, killing all of the 290 souls aboard including

66 infants and children. Of the tragedy, then President Reagan called it an “understandable accident.”⁴⁸ How, I wonder, did Iranian parents explain this—and the national celebrations that occurred on the following day—to their US-born children? It is exhibited in Reza Aslan’s admission that as a child in the 1980s, he “just told everybody [he] was Mexican.” Aslan explains, “It was very important that we kept the whole Muslim and Iranian thing on the down-low as much as possible.”⁴⁹ The maintenance of this static image of Iran is evident through the specific language chosen by then President Bush in 2002, including Iran in what he called an “axis of evil.” The static image is underscored by Rahimieh and Karim in their 2008 *MELUS* introduction cited at the beginning of this essay, describing Iranian Americans’ “anxieties about their national affiliation.”⁵⁰ It is made clear through Asghar Farhadi’s 2012 Golden Globe acceptance speech for his film, *A Separation*, when he described Iranians on an American stage by saying “I prefer to just say something about my people. I think they are a truly loving people.”⁵¹ Farhadi speaks into the expectation placed upon Iranians and Iranian Americans that he hopes to disrupt by humanizing his people. It is evident through the rhetoric surrounding the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the subsequent dismantling of the Iran Nuclear Deal. It is noticeable when, on a morning news show to discuss her fashion blog, Hoda Katebi is asked to share her thoughts on nuclear weapons.⁵² It is evident in a statement made about the dismantling of the deal, when the current President specifically said, “America will not be held *hostage* to nuclear blackmail. We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction. And we will not allow a regime that chants “Death to America” to gain access to the most deadly weapons on Earth.”⁵³ It is evident in a black and white poster featuring Ted Cruz’s face photoshopped onto a shirtless, muscular, and tattooed body with a limp cigarette in his mouth and the words “Iran’s Worst Nightmare” in bold font. It was clear on the day I gave birth to my son, when my labor and delivery nurse tilted her head to the side, and asked me where I was from before sharing her anecdotes about protesting the hostage crisis. All this to say, as a country, as a government, as a body of people, and as a diaspora, Iran and by extension—Iranians and Iranian Americans—have been for the last thirty-nine years frozen in a specific cultural memory. This litany—which is much abridged—illustrates the way that 1979 continues to haunt as well as the swiftness with which bodies rendered foreign are made to stand in for the government. Thus, when the choice is made to leave this scene untranslated, there is an expectation of how the audience would respond.

Scene Four

Fara learns that Javadi—instead of being held responsible for his crimes (that she recognizes as being committed against both the US and Iran)—will be reintegrated back into Iran, where he will perform the role of a double-agent, infiltrating the Islamic Republic to pursue US interests. In response to the news that he will be planted back into the government to act as an undercover agent, Fara exclaims, “Was this always the plan?” Her question is unnoticed and unanswered so she must repeat herself. Finally, Carrie responds, informing Fara, “well, you should be proud. Your work made it all possible.”⁵⁴

In the eighth episode, the shot focuses on Fara sitting in a parking lot. Her facial expressions illustrate confusion and frustration. She looks distracted. She then turns on her engine and reverses out of the parking spot. When she reappears on screen, she pulls into a residential driveway. As she enters the home, the shot focuses only on the lower half of her body. She removes her shoes and places them near several others by the front door. The audience sees several Persian rugs on the floor and hears Persian music playing in the background. From the music to the furniture to the abundance of photographs, the space appears very much invested in the maintenance of a connection to a homeland. Fara moves across the room to turn off the music. It is clear that as Fara begins to digest not

only what it might mean to occupy the position of as an agent of the state but also the inconsistency of justice occurring around her, she is unable to attend work. After the in-home nurse caring for her father leaves the home, Fara pushes off her hijab as she begins to speak with her father. What is most interesting about this particular exchange is that he speaks in Farsi while she consistently responds in English. Though this scene is untranslated, it differs from the scene between she and Javadi as her responses in English make his comments perceivable. She also continues to demand that he speak English instead of Farsi. When he finally does say something in English, it is a derogatory statement that reveals his prejudice towards people of Arab descent. Thus far in this season, not a singular Iranian man is illustrated outside of a negative trope.

Later, their doorbell rings and a white man in a suit appears at her front door. Before she can say anything, he says her name as though reading off a piece of paper. After giving her his business card and identifying himself as a CIA agent, he asks to enter the home. Their brief exchange is as follows:

AGENT: You called in sick two days in a row, is something the matter?

FARA: Migraines.

AGENT: Yet you drove to work yesterday.

FARA: Yes.

AGENT: Where you sat in the parking lot for over half an hour before deciding to leave again.

FARA: I was hoping that it would go away.⁵⁵

His unannounced and uninvited entrance into her home space illustrates the unlimited expanse of his power as well as the threat if she does not comply. The aching feeling that Fara experiences of being continually under surveillance is palatable. The feeling of "hoping that it would go away" becomes symbolic of the anxiety of simultaneously "embracing and disavowal" of an aspect of her identity.⁵⁶ The feeling is also symbolic of her recognizing that her presence within the CIA is a direct result of this specific aspect of her identity that marks her as a continual suspect. The man's entrance into her home is critical because it illustrates that there is no way she can fully extract herself from the role she performs. He then says to her, "Director Berenson has shown an unusual degree of confidence in you, Ms. Shirazi, and trusted you in matters of national importance. But your current state of mind makes your loyalty to him—and to the agency a live issue."⁵⁷ Here, again, he reminds her of what Saul demanded earlier. Fara "better be the best analyst" because that is the only explanation for her presence. The question of her loyalty also speaks to the dubious gaze always applied to her body.

The element and weight of surveillance is connected to her occupation within the CIA, but also to her identity and status as a Muslim Iranian American. Certainly, surveillance has had a significant presence in specific communities in a post-9/11 US. Deepa Iyer explains that, "From New York to California, South Asian, Muslim, and Arab communities have lived under institutional surveillance by their own government."⁵⁸ Furthermore, Iyer writes, "Most Americans take for granted the ability to worship freely, attend public demonstrations, and meet friends at their favorite restaurants to watch a sports game. But for Muslim, Arab and South Asian community members, these routine actions have potentially dangerous consequences."⁵⁹ For Fara, her choice to call in sick to work, an American ritual, is monitored and makes evident that any action she takes—no matter how commonplace or mundane—is to be under surveillance.

The suspicion placed upon her body speaks to how what is socially acceptable translates into what becomes legally acceptable treatment of specific bodies. Most recently, the various iterations of the executive order issuing a travel ban impacts Iranians and Iranian Americans like Fara, and will be discussed later in this essay. Prior to this current administration, Maghbouleh writes,

Although no Iranian nationals were involved in the planning or execution of the September 11 terrorist attacks, from 2002 through 2011 a special migrant National Security Entry Exit Registration System (NSEERS) required all Iranian and Iranian American men to present themselves for registration with the Department of Homeland Security.⁶⁰

That Maghbouleh must begin by noting that no Iranians were involved in the attacks on 9/11 is significant. This connects to anecdotal evidence by Iranian Americans themselves who cite this fact in public spaces as though it will remove decades of marginalization and suspicion placed upon their bodies. It is critical to recall that this has a particular history as “Iran continues to arouse seething passions in Americans . . . as a result of the incredibly detailed, highly focused attention of the media to the [hostage situation of 1979] and Iran’s demonization for years after it.”⁶¹ When the man at her front door questions her loyalty, it is not just about Fara calling in sick, it is about how she can never maneuver outside of the suspicion placed upon her body as an Iranian American and as a Muslim woman.

Scene Five

As a consequence of the uninvited home visit, Fara is forced to reveal to her father that she does not work at a bank but is instead a language specialist for the CIA. In defense of her decision, she explains, “Baba, an attack happened.” Her father responds by vehemently reminding her that her actions have implications in Iran, pleading: “we still have family in Tehran! Your uncle, his wife and children! They will be added to the list to be hanged!” Her response illustrates a significant turning point. When she says “I’m an American,” she implies a complete disavowal and defines herself solely by her allegiance to the US.⁶² Her verbal naming of herself in this moment, in this way, imagines that she cannot be both American and Iranian. Through her declaration, she names the death of an aspect of her identity as well as the impossibility of being both.

Certainly, this moment explores the tensions associated with generational differences and much can be said about the father’s understanding of the stakes of any level of political involvement from the entirety of his life in Iran. But there is more in this scene than simply the disparate political beliefs consequential to generational positionality. Through the threat of literal death, this scene examines the life of assimilation. Broadly, assimilation is most often understood in terms of that which is gained: a process by which an individual adapts to or adopts the practices, behavior, language, and culture of a dominant group (for survival). What is missing from this definition is the extent of loss associated with the process of assimilation. It becomes, in many ways, a death or irretrievable loss that is shaped by the circumstances of one’s migration. If, as Beydoun’s definition of Islamophobia suggests, her being Muslim is associated with being “inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable,” then she cannot be both Iranian and American. This is the precise tension that leads to what Rahimieh and Karim refer to as the “embracing and disavowal”⁶³

Throughout their presence in the US, Iranian Americans have documented their experiences of othering and racialization through memoirs, fiction, visual art, and poetry, among other mediums. In her poem “Ain’t No American Beauty Rose” (1999), Tara Fatemi

explicates the afterlife of this “open wound” through the experiences of an Iranian American child. I have chosen to include Fatemi’s poem in full because the short poem succinctly narrates the layered tensions that emerge from this ossified cultural memory and the impact this has on Iranian Americans decades later:

dirty
brown
ugly
weed
I am
responsible
for American
hostages
ten years
I cultivate
courage
to be myself
plant seeds
for pride
in heritage
man cackles
Shave your eyebrows
fuckin'
A-rab!
thick eyebrows
of my mother
grandmother
I want to pluck
all ancestry
his scythed
tongue
bleeds me.⁶⁴

Throughout the poem is an awareness of how the body is being read. Though young, it is clear that the child is introduced through the terms and values placed upon her body: “dirty/brown/ugly/weed.” To be a weed is to be unwanted and to be seen as an invasive nuisance that threatens the intentional garden. To claim responsibility for the “American hostages” illustrates the inability for an Iranian American to “come clean” or “strip down through the layers of attenuated meanings.”⁶⁵ The poet writes about a young child

working to cultivate, to grow intentionally with “courage” or “pride” only to have it ruptured by a moment of (mis)recognition. Here, again, the child’s body is being read. In this case, the child is misrecognized as Arab, though Fatemi illustrates how this misreading does not distract from the racist project of dehumanizing the child. In this scene of *Homeland*, the ghost of 1979 is alluded to first through the photographs and secondly through the choice not to translate the Iranians speaking loudly. The ghost gestures to the audience, signaling what they are expected to recognize: that the bodies are “responsible/for American hostages” and are meant to be read as suspicious always. In the poem, this cultural memory functions as a ghost, haunting a child’s possibility to grow beyond the burdensome confines of historical weight. Similarly, in this scene, the possibility to reckon with Fara’s complex personhood is overshadowed by the reading of her only through her proximity to the history of 1979.

My inclusion of the poem and my reading of this scene explores the feeling of unbelonging that festers for those whose migration has disrupted the imagined trajectory of one’s life, culture, heritage, safety, permanence, language, and sensibilities. Locating this temporal interruption as part and parcel of the Iranian diasporic experience, this scene identifies a particular collective displacement. This critical moment unearths the dynamic tension between Fara and her father. There is a particular type of cultural memory associated with migration that comes with the impossibility of ever returning. It is so important that her father immediately cites the possibility of death because it illustrates two points that are necessary to better understanding the father’s complex personhood—though he appears reductively simplified in these two short scenes. The first is the severity of death and the second is the fact that this is always on his mind—lingering on the tip of his tongue, waiting to be released. This is something that Iranian Americans, though not the ideal spectator, will recognize. Although continents away, the movement is always restricted. This is what it means to be Iranian in America. In this way, this exchange between Fara and her father speaks to the way that the past endlessly shapes the present for Iranian Americans. Fara’s declaration interrupts this. Her claiming ownership of the history of the attack as personal, disrupts and severs the waiting or longing for an elsewhere place. Which is shaped by a past, but not the past or future her father speaks of. This scene and the agent’s entering of her home, discussed in the previous scene, exhibits what the ability to move back and forth across borders says about power.

Scene Six

Fara makes her final appearance of the season in the last five minutes of the tenth episode. Working alone in a dark room, only the silhouette of her body is able to be seen, foreshadowing her death.⁶⁶ Her face is almost entirely cloaked in the darkness of the room. As Carrie enters the room, we see what she sees in both this moment, and perhaps all along: a shadow or dark shape. This moment speaks to the way that Fara is an object of gaze throughout the season. A shot illustrates Carrie as she pauses to gaze at Fara before entering, and before Fara knows that she is there. Carrie enters to speak with her:

CARRIE: Fara, you are one of the few people in the building that know that Mahjid Javadi is an agency asset.

FARA: I didn’t breathe a word to anybody.

Fara’s immediate response of “I didn’t breathe a word to anybody” underscores her permanent feeling of anxiety, of always already being read as a suspect. Carrie invites Fara even further into the interior, but as a cost, explaining that “Javadi is only half the play, there is another phase” and that the remainder of the operation will take place in Iran. Carrie’s request is clear as she says,

CARRIE: Fara, you have an uncle in Tehran, your father's brother...

FARA: No. You are asking me to put my family at extreme risk. You know you are. You forget I know firsthand how an operation can go sour. Tell the truth. You would never ask your own family to do this.

CARRIE: I might. And from what I know about your uncle, he is not one to cross the street to stay out of trouble's way.

FARA: He is a member of a moderate opposition group. Not a bomb thrower.

CARRIE: All we need is a place to meet in the city—a defacto safe house. Fara, we have a brother agent in the field, soon to be in mortal danger. Don't we owe him every chance to get out alive?⁶⁷

Carrie's reply is telling. The specificity of her language, and in particular, invoking the word "brother" exudes a level of inclusion as well as manipulation. The "operation" to which Fara refers is the killings of Fariba and her daughter-in-law that were seen as collateral damage. Moreover, Carrie's indication that she already knows about Fara's uncle's politics illustrates the expanse of their power over all aspects of her life. Secondly, this moment amplifies Fara's role as an agent of the state as both her technical skills and body are consumed. The "brother" in question is Brody, the ex-marine mentioned at the beginning of this essay. The framing of what is owed to Brody is interesting to consider as it exhibits what is owed to a singular white man in peril in Iran compared to what is owed to Fara, a Muslim Iranian American in the US. Put differently, her body is seen as expendable in ways that his are not. Even more, the lives of her family must be put at risk to save his. The fact that the scene cuts before she is able to answer implies that Carrie was not asking, she was demanding, and Fara must involve her family. In this final moment, the ways in which she and her body are utilized to move the plot forward is made clear.

Conclusion

Although some may contend that as a form of entertainment, a television series and the images it circulates should not be given much regard, let alone serve as the subject of serious study, I argue that in their devotion to marketing realness, and by that I mean, their dogged attempt to illustrate the based-on-a-true story component of their narratives, the creators and writers of *Homeland* actively pursue a blurred line between fantasy and fact.⁶⁸ It is critical to note that for some viewers, Fara might be the only Iranian or Muslim person they know. In the hybrid space of historical fact and generous fantasy in which they emerge, programs like *Homeland*—or the film *Argo* or the series *24* or the series *Scandal* or the more recent HBO series *Here and Now*—begin to constitute and replace the actual narratives on which they claim to be based. In other words, these performances stage a fictional realness and consequently gain both power and longevity as audiences digest images that purposely disguise their existence as a form of entertainment. The slippage of fact and fiction are swiftly woven together so that an audience consumes both without a clear distinction between the two.

Put simply, for racially marginalized and vulnerable bodies, there are immensely high stakes in representation of any form. There is a connection between the narratives on television programs and the news insofar as viewers are left with a notion of knowing or understanding without concern for the sweeping reductions of complex personhood. Edward Said writes of the news, suggesting:

[This coverage] has given consumers of news the sense that they have understood Islam without at the same time intimating to them that a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many

instances 'Islam' has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility.⁶⁹

The stakes do not just pertain to knowledge production, but to how that knowledge that is often shallowly produced shapes what treatment becomes measured as socially and legally acceptable.

Though much of this essay drew attention to the ghost of 1979, it is critical to frame this also within the present restrictions placed upon Iranians and Iranian Americans. The Supreme Court Decision in *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018) is worth exploring here to better understand the implications of the decision rendered as well as the historical comparisons made in the official Opinion of the Court.⁷⁰ The Syllabus describes the case: "In September 2017, the President issued Proclamation No. 9645, seeking to improved vetting procedures for foreign nationals traveling to the United States by identifying ongoing deficiencies in the information needed to assess whether nationals of particular countries present a security threat."⁷¹ What is left out of the sterile overview of this case is the humanity of the countless lives so frivolously upended when the current President issued his first executive order one week into his term. Stories of grandparents stranded in airports, individuals left without necessary medical care or access, loved ones separated without a clear reasoning or explanation are missing from this description. The travel ban has experienced various iterations with countries sometimes added to the list and sometimes removed. Iran has consistently been on list.⁷² The Supreme Court case was framed as one that focused on presidential powers, but woven throughout the statements and documents pertaining to the case are continual references to anti-Muslim animus that shaped the establishment of this particular executive order. In the Opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Roberts cites the President's clear anti-Muslim rhetoric, but states that "The Proclamation, moreover, is facially neutral toward religion" and furthermore, "The text says nothing about religion."⁷³ In other words, because the words "Muslim" or "Islam" are not explicitly included in the order and because over the course of its many iterations Muslim-majority countries have been removed from the list, it is argued that the intent is "neutral." Even more, the inclusion of non-Muslim-majority countries is utilized as evidence that this not targeted at Muslims. As Justice Sotomayor argues below, the public perception of this as a "Muslim Travel Ban" is drawn directly from the current President's own language that suggest a desire to ban Muslims from entering the US.

In the Dissenting Opinion offered by Justice Sotomayor, with Justice Ginsburg joining, the anti-Muslim rhetoric that the current President exhibited during his campaign and continues to exhibit during his term makes quite clear the impetus for the order. Justice Sotomayor argues for the impossibility of separating the very clear anti-Muslim rhetoric from this executive order citing, "The full record paints a far more harrowing picture, from which a reasonable observer would readily conclude that the Proclamation was motivated by a hostility and animus towards the Muslim faith."⁷⁴ Even more, while the Chief Justice Roberts held that the comparisons made to the internment of Japanese Americans was not comparable to this case, Justice Sotomayor notes that "on December 8, 2015 Trump justified his proposal during a television interview by noting that President Franklin D. Roosevelt 'did the same thing' with respect to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II."⁷⁵ In his own words, the current President likened his travel ban to the internment of Japanese Americans. In her opinion, Justice Sotomayor enumerated several incidents that could not be overlooked in the decision in the case, noting first that "while litigation over EO-2 was ongoing, President Trump repeatedly made statements alluding to a desire to keep Muslims out of the country."⁷⁶ Secondly, that

"On November 29, 2017, President Trump 'retweeted' three anti-Muslim videos, entitled 'Muslim Destroys a Statue of Virgin Mary!', 'Islamist mob pushes teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!', and 'Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!'"⁷⁷

The question as the court framed it was not whether to denounce his rhetoric, but whether he was acting within his powers as President to make such an order. We must ask how it is possible that the transparent and consistent language used to dehumanize an entire group of people is to be cast aside and ignored. "A reasonable observer," wrote Justice Sotomayor, "would conclude that the Proclamation was driven primarily by anti-Muslim animus, rather than by the Government's asserted national-security justifications."⁷⁸ In her concluding statements, Justice Sotomayor makes plain the urgency and relevance in resisting any legislature or government-endorsed policies that are steeped in discrimination, even when cloaked by neutral language. She concludes:

The First Amendment stands as a bulwark against official religious prejudice and embodies our Nation's deep commitment to religious plurality and tolerance Instead of vindicating those principles, today's decision tosses them aside. In holding that the First Amendment gives way to an executive policy that a reasonable observer would view as motivated by animus against Muslims, the majority opinion upends this Court's precedent, repeats tragic mistakes of the past, and denies countless individuals the fundamental right of religious liberty."⁷⁹

In what ways does this Supreme Court decision, like the ever present suspicion placed upon Fara's body, actually further establish an impenetrable binary between American and outsider? In what ways does this decision connect directly to Fara's first moment onscreen, showing her identification clearly amidst stares and the feeling that she should be watched? How does this decision further connect to what Rahimieh and Karim define as a "community's anxieties around their national affiliation?" In what ways does this deny Iranian Americans, among the other groups targeted, the full rights of citizenship? In other words, when legislature defines one's body as other, when it creates separate laws to impact specific bodies, how does this shape one's lived experience? Can the impact ever be known?

Ours is a history of separation. In every Iranian American family is the story of a relative that remains on the other side of the world: grandmothers who have not yet met their grandchildren, mothers who have not seen their sons in thirty years. Marriages uncelebrated and funerals unattended. In response to the travel ban, Persis Karim writes of her own family member who has

missed countless definitive moments in the lives of our family—births, marriages, deaths. It has never been easy for Iranians who scattered around the globe after the revolution. Nearly 3 million Iranians have immigrated to the United States alone since 1979, and countless political escalations between this country and Iran have left them in physical, emotional and legal limbo. This "travel ban" implemented by this administration is yet more of the same, and even worse; at its core, the executive order is designed to divide and separate individuals, families, and nations, and it continues the long arc of animosity and stereotyping that has little to do with the everyday lives of Iranians and Iranian Americans.⁸⁰

Since 1979, there has been an uncontested repetition around the narrative of Iran and Iranians in the American imaginary. In this way, the hidden meaning as it relates to the character Fara, and her treatment as a human being, would reveal that she cannot exist as

she is denied access to both a home and a land. Fara is at once exposed to a level of suspicion and maltreatment as a simple consequence of her race, religion, and gender, while at the same time she is utilized as a resource that ultimately contributes to the demise or precarious position of individuals to whom she is related. Fara occupies a somewhat impossible position because while she is privy to interior spaces, she is not privy to the political, economic or social privileges that the others enjoy.

While Fara is welcomed inside the space of the CIA and brought into the interior, she is always already looked at as a threat. To borrow from Laura Mulvey, “going far beyond highlighting a woman’s to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself.”⁸¹ The gaze focused on her is always dubious, as the very aspect of her identity that allows her entrance as an expert also defines her as a threat. While she must denounce any affiliation with Iran, she is simultaneously kept on the margins in the US. She is never exonerated of her suspect-status, evident in her inability to officially mourn. The title itself, *Homeland*, cannot possibly apply to Fara, as she is denied both the security of a new home and the identification with a former land.

Notes

1. Persis Karim and Nasrin Rahimieh, “Writing Iranian Americans into the American Literature Canon,” *MELUS* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 9–10. [D](#)
2. Roshanak Kheshti, “Can the Memoirist Speak? Representing Iranian Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Recent Popular and Scholarly Publications,” *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 51. [D](#)
3. Kheshti, “Can the Memoirist Speak,” 51; Karim and Rahimieh, “Writing Iranian Americans,” 9–10. The character of Fara is played by British-Iranian actress Nazanin Boniadi. [D](#)
4. While this paper focuses exclusively on Fara and how she is discarded as a character after this moment season three, it should be noted that she reappears as a member of Carrie’s team in season four when the group is stationed in Islamabad. She is murdered by Haissam Haqqani (played by Numan Acar) in Episode 10, titled “13 hours in Islamabad” and her death goes largely unmourned with the exception of her one teammate, Max (played by Maury Sterling). Her assignment on Carrie’s team, her movement to Islamabad, and her removal of her hijab in season four receives no attention or explanation in the show. I have chosen to focus exclusively on her character’s arc in season three because it illustrates the particular tension she experiences as a Muslim woman in America, though much can be said about how her character is written and discarded in season four. [D](#)
5. I make the argument that there is an ossified public memory about Iran and Iranians that stems from this historical moment and the hostage crisis that began on November 4, 1979 and lasted 444 days operates like a ghost that continues to haunt the present. For more extensive details about this historical moment and the media representations of it, see: Karim and Rahimieh, “Writing Iranian Americans into the American Literature Canon”; David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America’s First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); or Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1997) [D](#)
6. In its most recent iteration, the list of banned countries includes two non-Muslim-majority countries. This fact is often utilized to refute the perception of the ban as a “Muslim Travel Ban.” [D](#)
7. Jorie Lagerwey and Diane Negra, “Analyzing *Homeland*: Introduction,” *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 126–131 [D](#)
8. Lagerwey and Negra, “Analyzing *Homeland*,” 126. [D](#)

9. Lagerwey and Negra, "Analyzing *Homeland*," 131. 
10. Alex Bevan, "The National Body, Women, and Mental Health in *Homeland*," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015), 145–151. 
11. Lindsay Steenberg and Yvonne Tasker, "'Pledge Allegiance': Gendered Surveillance, Crime Television, and *Homeland*," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 132–198. 
12. Stephen Shapiro, "*Homeland's* Crisis of Middle-Class Transformation," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 152–158. 
13. James Castonguay, "Fictions of Terror: Complexity, Complicity and Insecurity in *Homeland*," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 139–144. 
14. Castonguay, "Fictions of Terror," 143. 
15. Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with the naming and development of the theoretical frameworks of both intersectionality and critical race theory. On the inception of critical race theory, Mari Matsuda writes, "Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw began calling what radical law professors of color were doing 'critical race theory' when she organized a retreat at a spartan, convent in the summer of 1989. It was 'critical' both because we criticized and because we respected and drew on the tradition of postmodern critical thought then popular with left intellectuals. It was 'race' theory because we were, both by personal circumstance and through our understanding of history convinced that racism and the construction of race were central to understanding of American law and politics. As legal theory, critical race theory uncovers racist structures within the legal system and asks how and whether law is a means to attain justice." See Mari Matsuda, "Critical Race Theory," in *Where is Your Body: And Other Essays on Race, Gender, and the Law* (Boston: Beacon, 1996). 
16. Allia Ida Griffin, "On the Burden of Proof: Racialized Violence and the Limits of Public Mourning," *contemporary*. August 17, 2017. 
17. See Maytha Alhassan's recent study, "Haqq and Hollywood: Illuminating 100 Years of Muslim Tropes and How to Transform Them," *Pop Culture Collaborative*, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://popcollab.org/haqq-and-hollywood/>. See also Evelyn Alsultany *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation After 9/11* (New York: NYU Press, 2012). 
18. "Uh...Oh...Ah..." *Homeland*, season 3, episode 2, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
19. Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2012), 291. 
20. "Uh...Oh...Ah..." *Homeland*, season 3, episode 2, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
21. See, for example, Nima Naghibi's *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (2007), Farzaneh Milani's *Veils and Words: Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 1992), or Minoo Moallem's *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (2005). 
22. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *The Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 203. 
23. Khaled Beydoun, *American Islamophobia* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 28. 

24. Mona El-Ghabashy, "Quandaries of Representation," in *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011). 
25. "Uh...Oh...Ah..." *Homeland*, season 3, episode 2, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
26. "Uh...Oh...Ah..." *Homeland*, season 3, episode 2, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
27. Michael Eric Dyson, "Foreward: Keyser Söze, Beyoncé, and the Witness Protection Program," in *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race* (Boston: Beacon, 2018), ix. 
28. Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* (New York: St. Martins, 2017), 46. 
29. Dyson, "Foreward," xi. 
30. Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 5. 
31. Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness*, 18-24. 
32. Beydoun. *American Islamophobia*, 119. 
33. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 8. 
34. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 8. 
35. Translated from Farsi to English by the author. 
36. "Still Positive," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 6, written by Alexander Cary, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
37. "Still Positive," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 6, written by Alexander Cary, directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, Showtime, 2013. 
38. "Gerontion," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 7, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Carl Franklin, Showtime, 2013. 
39. "Gerontion," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 7, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Carl Franklin, Showtime, 2013. 
40. "Gerontion," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 7, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Carl Franklin, Showtime, 2013. Translated from Farsi by the author. 
41. Milani, *Veils and Words*, 4. 
42. Ibid., 119. 
43. David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2005), 1-2. 
44. Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 13. 
45. Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness*, 25. 
46. Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 12. 
47. Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness*, 28-29. 
48. Bill McAllister and Chris Adams, "Reagan Terms Incident 'Understandable Accident,'" *Washington Post*, July 5, 1988. 
49. Reza Aslan, "Reza Aslan: Why American TV Needs a Muslim Modern Family," *The Secret Life of Muslims*, <http://www.secretlifeofmuslims.com/>. 
50. Karim and Rahimieh, "Writing Iranian Americans," 9-10. 
51. Gazelle Emami, "Asghar Farhadi, Golden Globe Winner For 'A Separation' Talks Getting Past the Censors in Iran," *Huffington Post*, January 17, 2012. 
52. Halie Lesavage, "Fashion Blogger Hoda Katebi on Her WGN News Interview: 'This Happens All the Time' (Updated)," *Glamour*, February 16, 2018. 

53. "Read the Full Transcript of Trump's Speech on the Iran Nuclear Deal," *New York Times*, May 8, 2018. [D](#)
54. "Gerontion," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 7, written by Chip Johannessen, directed by Carl Franklin, Showtime, 2013. [D](#)
55. "A Red Wheel Barrow," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 8, written by Seith Mann, directed by Alex Gansa and James Yoshimura, Showtime, 2013. [D](#)
56. Karim and Rahimieh, "Writing Iranian Americans," 9–10. [D](#)
57. "A Red Wheel Barrow," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 8, written by Seith Mann, directed by Alex Gansa and James Yoshimura, Showtime, 2013. [D](#)
58. Deepa Iyer, *We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape our Multiracial Future* (New York: The New Press, 2015) 65. [D](#)
59. Iyer, *We Too Sing*, 65. [D](#)
60. Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness*, 30. [D](#)
61. Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (Vintage: New York, 1997), 81. [D](#)
62. "A Red Wheel Barrow," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 8, written by Seith Mann, directed by Alex Gansa and James Yoshimura, Showtime, 2013. [D](#)
63. Karim and Rahimieh, "Writing Iranian Americans," 9–10. [D](#)
64. Tara Fatemi, "I Ain't No American Beauty Rose," in *A World Between: Poems, Short Stories, and Essays by Iranian Americans*, ed. Persis M. Karim and Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami (New York: George Braziller, 1999). [D](#)
65. Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 203. [D](#)
66. Fara Shirazi appears in season four before being brutally murdered. This is the last moment she speaks or is referred to during season three. [D](#)
67. "Good Night," *Homeland*, season 3, episode 10, written by Keith Gordon, directed by Alexander Cary and Charlotte Stoudt, Showtime, 2013. [D](#)
68. Much can be said about how the opening sequence sets up this blurred line by drawing from actual footage of historical incidents and speech by multiple US Presidents. [D](#)
69. Said. *Covering Islam*, li. [D](#)
70. Of the three plaintiffs represented in this case, one was Iranian American with relatives in Iran. [D](#)
71. "Syllabus," *Trump v. Hawaii*, US 17-965 (2018), 1. [D](#)
72. The current set of countries on the list includes Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, North Korea, and Venezuela. [D](#)
73. Chief Justice Roberts, "Opinion of the Court," *Trump v. Hawaii*, 29, 34. [D](#)
74. Justice Sotomayor. "Dissenting Opinion." *Trump v. Hawaii*, 5. [D](#)
75. Sotomayor, "Dissenting Opinion," 5. [D](#)
76. Sotomayor, "Dissenting Opinion," 8. [D](#)
77. Sotomayor, "Dissenting Opinion," 9–10. [D](#)
78. Sotomayor, "Dissenting Opinion," 11. [D](#)
79. Sotomayor, "Dissenting Opinion," 19. [D](#)
80. Persis Karim, "Iranians have always lived in limbo in the United States. Now it's Chaos," *Washington Post*, August 29, 2018. [D](#)
81. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, ed. Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay (New York: Routledge, 2005), 274. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Allia Ida Griffin

Allia Ida Griffin earned her Ph.D. in Literature and Cultural Studies at UC San Diego. She currently teaches in the Ethnic Studies Department at Santa Clara University. Her work has also appeared in *contemporary*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Oliva McKeon, "Dance, Real Estate, and Institutional Critique: Reconsidering Glorya Kaufman's Dance Philanthropy in Los Angeles," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.4>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Dance, Real Estate, and Institutional Critique: Reconsidering Glorya Kaufman's Dance Philanthropy in Los Angeles

Olive McKeon

ABSTRACT Glorya Kaufman, a philanthropist with a keen interest in dance, has given significant financial resources in recent years to support dance at universities and theaters in Los Angeles. Kaufman's dance patronage is enabled by a fortune amassed by her late husband. Along with Eli Broad, Donald Bruce Kaufman co-founded Kaufman & Broad in 1957, which became a major purveyor of housing subdivisions in the United States and abroad. In this article, I contextualize Kaufman's philanthropy within the processes that generated her wealth and the economic role that suburbanization played in the post-war period. In distinction to celebratory narratives that extol patronage for dance, a Marxist analysis of Kaufman's philanthropy reveals the material connections between concert dance and real estate development. By de-obscurizing the source of Kaufman's wealth, I show how dance funding is bound up in the history of white flight, urban redevelopment, and real estate schemes in Southern California. Practices of institutional critique might prove useful for rethinking Kaufman's gifts and the political functions of dance patronage.

Introduction

Glorya Kaufman, a philanthropist with a keen interest in dance, has given significant financial resources in recent years to dance institutions in Los Angeles. In 2012, she donated funding to the University of Southern California (USC) to establish a new dance department, including \$46 million to build the Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center, opening in the fall of 2016. With this funding, USC's new dance school appointed prominent contemporary ballet choreographer William Forsythe as artistic adviser. This came on the heels of major donations to the University of California, Los Angeles (an \$18 million gift to restore the dance building, which amounted to the largest individual arts donation in UC history) as well as \$20 million to the Los Angeles Music Center to fund performances by touring dance companies. A fortune amassed by her late husband, who died in 1983, underpins these recent allocations of dance funding. Along with Eli Broad, Donald Bruce Kaufman co-founded Kaufman & Broad (now known as the Fortune 500 company KB Home) in 1957, which builds housing subdivisions in the United States and abroad. In the case of Glorya Kaufman, the revenue generated through unleashing tract housing later becomes major funding for contemporary dance in Los Angeles.

Upon entering the luminous dance studios at USC and UCLA, one might appreciate Kaufman's support for dance as a medium. Her generosity provides spaces for harnessing the possibilities inherent in dance for celebration, healing, and community building. She offers opportunities for a diverse group of dance artists—some world-renown, some emerging—to hone their craft and create meaningful work. While one can find many reasons to laud her advocacy for dance, I approach Kaufman's philanthropy through a simple question: where did the money come from? In contradistinction to the heroic narrative of the generous patron, the beautiful dance center, and the strong, lithe dancers jumping towards excellence, I consider the material mechanisms that made these "gifts" possible.

Glorya Kaufman's dance patronage offers a case to chart the relation between concert dance and capital accumulation and to consider how dance patronage might function to legitimate real estate development. I contextualize Kaufman's philanthropy within the processes that generated her wealth and the economic role that suburbanization has played in the postwar United States context. A Marxist analysis of Kaufman's philanthropy illuminates the dynamics of capitalist generosity, as it transmutes processes of exploitation into acts of giving. I point not towards Kaufman's personal generosity or selfishness, but to how the structural relations of capitalism shape arts institutions. Far from a simple act of generosity, her patronage functions to "art wash" regimes of real estate speculation.¹ Patronage allows profiteering to become re-figured as altruistic support of dancerly grace. De-obscuring the source of Kaufman's wealth shows us how concert dance funding is bound up in the history of suburbanization, white flight, and urban redevelopment in the Southern Californian context. While institutional critique within dance may appear ill-advised considering how little funding supports concert dance, I hope that charting the connections between dance and real estate can help dancers to soberly consider what made this capital accumulation possible and who benefits from these gifts.

Examining the financial sources of Kaufman's philanthropy presents an occasion to think expansively about the politics of concert dance. In approaching questions of politics, dance scholarship often investigates the construction of identity within movement practices or finds within dance forms of collective resistance and resilience, while side-stepping the concrete material circumstances at play.² Critical inquiry into dance patronage can reexamine the autonomy traditionally claimed by dance as an art form, as distanced from commercial, erotic, and social dance. Dance as an aesthetic practice usually holds three claims to autonomy: economic autonomy (dancing as separate from the pursuit of profit), social autonomy (dance as a specialized field, distinct from every day, amateur practices), and political autonomy (dance as a form of unfettered expression).³ Detailing sources of funding for dance can show the limits of these forms of autonomy, as economic interests crucially constrain concert dance. Private patronage in the arts can have various material functions: a) it reflects a stake in the speculative value of art works, b) donations come at opportune moments to distract from nefarious business practices and promote the public image of corporations, c) patrons utilize cultural institutions as tax havens, or d) patronage functions as a means to exert control over urban centers. This last line of inquiry becomes important for thinking about Glorya Kaufman and her Los Angeles context.

Approaches to Cultural Patronage

Informed by the gesture of institutional critique, I offer a critical account of Kaufman's philanthropy, connecting her giving to the history of Kaufman & Broad's mass production of housing subdivisions. Contrasting a Bourdieuan interpretation of art patronage, my argument stems from a Marxist framework. Bourdieu casts philanthropy as a means for members of a dominant class to accumulate symbolic capital in the form of prestige and recognition.⁴ While patrons certainly champion their own symbolic legacy, I argue that what appears as generosity emerges from the drives of capital accumulation more narrowly. While Bourdieu offers insight into the social distinction sought by patrons, a Marxist framework illuminates the material conditions that allowed them to accumulate their wealth. Support for concert dance is distinct from museum patronage as presenting dance does not offer the possibility of financial return that art objects do. For this reason, I focus on the financial relationships between dance institutions and real estate speculation.

While art historians and cultural critics have analyzed Eli Broad's philanthropy, dance researchers have not yet examined Glorya Kaufman's donations.⁵ Within critical conversations about the politics of dance patronage, previous scholars have explored the forms of private funding that supported influential choreographers and the political processes involved in public patronage for modern dance in the United States.⁶ I see this analysis of Kaufman's patronage as contributing to what dance historian Sally Banes refers to as "critical institutional studies," which she views as influenced by developments in other fields including institutional critique in the visual arts and the rise of museum studies.⁷ While Banes notes how the impetus to examine the infrastructure of dance stems from the tradition of materialist art criticism, dance scholars have yet to write any patronage studies that take up a Marxist frame.⁸ Previous research has not inquired about the sources of capital accumulation that became patronage or critically examined the economic function these donations might have for the funders. For example, Lynn Garafola's engagement with patrons is largely celebratory and untroubled by the broader conditions of capitalist accumulation.⁹ Building upon previous investigations of funding for dance, the analysis I pursue here foregrounds a critique of the economic relations that ensconce concert dance.¹⁰

Patronage studies in other fields have analyzed the social and economic functions of private cultural funding.¹¹ In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, INCITE! offers a materialist account, asserting that private foundations operate as tax shelters and "allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through 'philanthropic' work."¹² Ruth Wilson Gilmore astutely argues that private "foundations are repositories of twice-stolen wealth—a) profit sheltered from b) taxes—that can be retrieved by those who stole it at the opera or the museum, at Harvard or a fine medical facility."¹³ Gilmore's view of philanthropy is rooted within Marxist political economy, an economic framework that understands profit itself as a form of theft. Mainstream or neoclassical economics posit capitalism as a benign system of exchange in which financial rewards go to those with innovative thinking, entrepreneurial cunning, and an appetite for risk. In contrast, Marxian economics views profit, or "surplus-value," as originating in the exploitation of labor-power. Capitalism's emergence and rise to global dominance rest upon violent processes of primitive accumulation, dispossession, and exploitation, as George Caffentzis describes:

Capitalism did not start as the result of the realization that trading commodities is a "win-win" exchange, but as a series of acts of violent expropriation and enslavement in many sites across the planet. This violence made it possible to accumulate the initial mass of laboring bodies required for the endangered ruling classes of Western Europe to begin a cycle of exploitation that has lasted to this day.¹⁴

When viewed through this lens, private philanthropy takes on a different tenor as a tool of the capitalist class to buttress their economic and political power. Tracking how Glorya Kaufman came to possess her wealth allows us to chart the connections between concert dance, capital accumulation, and land use struggles.

History of Kaufman & Broad

To understand where Kaufman's wealth comes from, we must begin in Detroit where Glorya grew up and Kaufman & Broad was founded. The daughter of Eva and Samuel Pinkis, Glorya Pinkis was born into a working class Jewish family in 1930.¹⁵ In 1954, Glorya married Donald Kaufman (1922–1983), a fellow Detroit native of Russian Jewish descent who became a general contractor.¹⁶ The couple earned a modest living, which Glorya contributed to by working as a bookkeeper for a medical clinic. Also in 1954,

Glorya Kaufman's cousin, Edythe Lawson, married Eli Broad (born 1933), the son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania who had become a young accountant.¹⁷ After being fired from his first job and determined to forge a new venture, Broad found Kaufman's trade as a contractor intriguing. He speculated that the postwar generation would create a surge in demand for single family homes.¹⁸ In 1957, Broad went into business with Kaufman, contributing his accounting skills to Kaufman's experience as a homebuilder. For their first endeavor, Kaufman and Broad borrowed \$25,000 from Morris Lawson (Glorya's uncle) to construct two model homes in a suburb northeast of Detroit.¹⁹ Kaufman & Broad developed a business model that centered on reducing the input expenses of building houses for the lower end of the market. As their chief cost saving mechanism, they built houses without basements. Broad describes the thinking behind this decision:

The first bit of conventional wisdom that my homebuilding partner, Don Kaufman, and I encountered was the firm belief that no one in Detroit would buy a house without a basement. We asked, "Why not?" The answer produced our first big idea: no basements... Basements had historically been the place to store coal to heat your home for the winter. New gas heating eliminated the need to stockpile coal, so basements weren't a necessity.²⁰

In addition to eliminating basements, they used inexpensive building materials, swapped the garage for a carport, removed architects' fees by designing the layout themselves, and developed an accelerated construction schedule that was four weeks faster than their competitors. They approached home-building not as real estate development but as a manufacturing business, "turning the single-family residence into a mass commodity like any other."²¹ With careful attention to the methods of credit, Broad developed a financing structure that kept mortgage payments lower than the average rents, creating a financial incentive for residents to buy rather than rent. Kaufman & Broad compensated for low prices with increased volume, becoming profitable largely through economies of scale. Kaufman & Broad exemplified a distinct type of developer, a merchant builder who built whole "communities" and integrated the tasks of "land purchase, site improvement, construction, and merchandising together in a single firm."²² Pioneering their model in Michigan, they began developing subdivisions in Arizona in 1960 and California in 1963, becoming a major purveyor of suburbanization in the American west. Relocating to Los Angeles, Kaufman & Broad emerged as the largest homebuilder in California over the course of the 1960s, soon expanding their tract housing business into international markets.²³ The company was the first housing producer listed on the New York Stock Exchange. At the time of Kaufman's death in 1983, they held more than \$1 billion in assets.²⁴ Kaufman & Broad combined two forms of capital accumulation, relative surplus value and land rent extraction, to amass this fortune.²⁵

While Kaufman & Broad used their cunning acumen to maximize profits, they also emerged at a moment when structural forces coalesced to support suburban development on a mass scale. David Harvey argues that the capitalist class used postwar suburbanization to inhibit an over-accumulation crisis.²⁶ The construction of new housing developments and its attendant structure of consumption provided a way to utilize excess capital:

The dilemmas of potential over accumulation which faced the US in 1945 were in part resolved through a suburbanization process which created new modes of living in accordance with the needs of capital accumulation. Furthermore, individualized homeownership promoted via a credit system which encourages debt encumbrance, is hardly neutral in relation to class struggle.²⁷

Capital used suburban housing development and its accompanying infrastructure to fill the role that the war industries had previously played in absorbing economic surplus and staving off crisis. In Harvey's analysis of the social logic accompanying suburbanization, the ruling class prevented social unrest through the spread of indebtedness and an identification with the defense of property values. Following the class warfare of the 1930s, capital struck a bargain with labor, partly through the promise of the single family home for dutiful workers. In the emergent postwar geographic reorganization, capital used private home ownership as a basis for social cohesion.²⁸ For this reason, the success and scale of Kaufman & Broad's business in part relied on the structural needs of capital in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II as housing provision became one of the means by which capital dealt with its internal contradictions.

Kaufman & Broad sold tract housing, but they also trafficked in American fantasies and fears. In *Crabgrass Frontier*, historian Kenneth Jackson describes suburbia as "both a planning type and a state of mind based on imagery and symbolism."²⁹ The ideology of suburban development connected home-ownership to social status and "a kind of sublime insurance against ill fortune."³⁰ Feminist historian Dolores Hayden sees within the suburb a set of longings—for upward mobility, economic security, individual autonomy, and social harmony—as well as the gendered ideology of female domesticity and male home ownership.³¹ Robert Fishman describes the lure of the suburb as predicated on a logic of exclusion:

suburbia embodies a new ideal of family life, an ideal so emotionally charged that it made the home more sacred to the bourgeoisie than any place of worship.... Yet this "utopia" was always at most a partial paradise, a refuge not only from threatening elements in the city but also from discordant elements in bourgeois society itself. From its origins, the suburban world of leisure, family life, and union with nature was based on the principle of exclusion.³²

These *bourgeois utopias* exclude all industry, allowing residents to spatially dissociate from the world of capital and work into a fantasy of neighborly leisure.

Racial exclusion also played an equally salient role in the process of postwar suburbanization. In Eric Avila's illuminating analysis, suburbanization crucially contributed to the process of white racial formation, with space functioning as a means to codify racial identity.³³ Avila views the term 'white flight' as a misnomer, as the process of moving to the suburbs helped to consolidate whiteness as a racial category. He argues that the socio-spatial order emerging in the postwar period sanctioned the formation of a new racial geography. Whiteness, as opposed to a smattering of distinct European ethnicities, became the product of suburbanization and its logic of racial exclusion. An inclusive white identity, in distinction to the concentration of racial otherness in urban centers, became a consequence of suburbia, which Avila understands as having lasting effects: "the spatial reorganization of the American city gave rise to a new racial awareness that, for better or for worse, still grips our collective imagination."³⁴ The values embedded within suburbia—homogeneity, containment, predictability—correspond to the emptying out of distinct ethnic identities that is characteristic of whiteness. The success and scale of Kaufman & Broad's business depended upon and fueled these larger patterns concerning the racial politics of space in the postwar context.

In the prologue to his seminal *City of Quartz*, urban historian Mike Davis uses the gated communities manufactured by Kaufman & Broad in Southern California's Antelope Valley as a central metaphor for the banal, dystopian sprawl indicative of the Los Angeles landscape, in what he terms "the *eutopia* (literally no-place) logic of their [Kaufman & Broad's] subdivisions, in sterilized sites stripped bare of nature and history,

masterplanned only for privatized family consumption.”³⁵ Kaufman & Broad, through their aggressive rationalization of suburban homebuilding, made a fortune through peddling spatial homogeneity and tedium. Although he died at the age of 60 in a biplane crash, Donald Kaufman left the spoils of this fortune within trusts that name his wife as the beneficiary.³⁶ One can infer the scope of Glorya Kaufman’s current net worth by examining the amount of money she gives away freely.

Glorya Kaufman’s Dance Philanthropy

I turn now to Glorya Kaufman’s activity as a dance philanthropist, unfolding the social and aesthetic logic of her decisions. Beginning in the late 1990s, Kaufman has poured millions into concert dance in Los Angeles and New York City, including \$6 million to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and \$3.5 million to the Juilliard School.³⁷ She centers her philanthropic activity in Los Angeles, where she has lived since 1963.

Kaufman’s largest donations have gone to dance institutions in LA, beginning with the \$18 million she gave to UCLA’s School of Arts and Architecture in 1999. *Dance Magazine’s* Pamela Diamond referred to Kaufman’s gift to renovate UCLA’s dance building as “the largest of its kind in American dance.”³⁸ Built in 1932 as a women’s gymnasium and housing UCLA’s dance department since 1962, the hall’s renovation was completed in 2004, financed by Kaufman’s donation along with additional federal funds that together amounted to a \$35 million budget.³⁹

Observing Kaufman’s role at UCLA reveals two of her predilections as a philanthropist: her desire to exert aesthetic control and her privileging of balletic/modern dance technical prowess as a barometer for dance education. Kaufman adopted a “hands-on,” or more accurately top-down, approach to the UCLA building, which she described to the *Los Angeles Times*: “I picked out every color and every chair and the wood.”⁴⁰ A former UCLA undergraduate remembers that Kaufman made large x’s in permanent marker on any piece of marble that was not white enough, demanding their replacement. She forbid the department to tape any posters to the walls, so that the hallways would remain pristinely empty. As a final flourish, she had a bas relief sculpture of herself as a young dancer installed in the building’s outdoor courtyard. Kaufman told the *New York Times* that exerting control over design decisions makes funding projects worthwhile for her: “I don’t do anything unless I’m involved, because that’s no fun. And besides, they’re using my name. I better like it! So I’m going to be part of the design of the building and the curriculum.”⁴¹ For Kaufman, philanthropy means exercising her own cultural taste.

The irony of UCLA’s Kaufman Hall is that architects designed the building for a dance program and performance series that did not exist. UCLA had created a dance department in 1962, yet because of a decrease in arts funding in the 1990s, the program had folded into the World Arts and Cultures department in 1995.⁴² Originally named “Ethnic Arts,” faculty from six departments created World Arts and Cultures in 1972 in response to student struggles demanding a non-Eurocentric arts curriculum.⁴³ The WAC department offers classes in numerous non-western dance forms, and the faculty have an experimental and postmodern orientation. Kaufman’s attempt to create a dance school focused on conservatory training in modern and ballet chafed against the priorities of the existing department. Kaufman’s building includes a 274-seat dance theater, an 89-seat black box theater, a garden pavilion theater, and a box office, which she intended as facilities for robust dance programming. In reporting on the building’s renovation, Victoria Looseleaf and Allan Ullrich described the lack of infrastructure for utilizing Kaufman Hall as a dance presenter: “programming works other than student-faculty fare poses an immediate challenge. Christopher Waterman, dean of the School of the Arts and Architecture, says that no endowment currently exists for such fare, and that it might take

a year to determine how community needs could be integrated with UCLA's use of the building.⁴⁴ The building's box office has rarely been used. In speaking with the *New York Times*, Kaufman was reticent to speak about her displeasure with UCLA: "I don't like to talk about it. Let's just say I was disappointed with U.C.L.A. They weren't able to realize my vision. They couldn't have a B.F.A. [program]. That really tells it all."⁴⁵ Within Kaufman's desire for a BFA program lies a vision of dance education defined by athleticism and technical competence in western concert forms. While Kaufman has not stated why she has a vested interest in a BFA, we might infer that ballet and modern dance represent to her more socially elevated and prestigious dance genres.

Following her disappointment with UCLA, Kaufman shifted her focus to USC, a university that did not have a dance department. In November 2012, she gave USC an undisclosed sum to fund a new conservatory-style dance program, which Kaufman intended as a "Juilliard of the West."⁴⁶ Much of this funding went to the construction of a new \$46 million building, the Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center. To direct the program, the school hired Jodie Gates, a former dancer with the Joffrey and Frankfurt Ballets who had taught at UC Irvine. William Forsythe agreed to teach on campus for six weeks each academic year. The new department ushered in its first students in 2015, and the building opened in 2016. Branding the department as "The New Movement," Kaufman's school adopts a post-Fordist image of the dancer. Gates describes the program's intent "to breed the next generation of hybrid artists—creators, innovators, entrepreneurs."⁴⁷ No longer training to dance simply in a ballet corps or established repertory company, USC conceptualizes dancers as abiding with a capitalist logic of entrepreneurial innovation. Yet to become these hybrid, interdisciplinary artists, students must pay the private university tuition, currently \$55,320 for the 2018–2019 academic year. Dean Robert Cutietta describes the Kaufman School as "not overly generous" with scholarships.⁴⁸ The USC department offers proximity to prestige in dance to students willing to stomach an exorbitant amount of student debt or those with parents who can foot the bill.

What exactly draws Kaufman to dance? She has never studied ballet or modern dance, preferring to pick up social dances such as the tango, the quickstep, and the cha-cha.⁴⁹ Kaufman has stated that she always wanted to be a dancer, but her family lacked the money for lessons when she was a child.⁵⁰ Her tastes are not especially avant-garde: she loves the televised dance competition *So You Think You Can Dance* and never misses an episode.⁵¹ Kaufman conceptualizes dance as a conduit for happiness and edifying character development: "This is something that brings joy, and I don't think we have enough of it [...] It gives you self-esteem, posture. You know how to walk into a room."⁵² Kaufman understands dance as capable of bridging forms of social difference, describing the medium's "ability to cross socio-cultural boundaries that often separate people and bring them together, as well as facilitating their ability to communicate with one another."⁵³ Reflecting these priorities, the USC school offers training in diverse dance forms and has hired some estimable artists of color. Kaufman's patronage evinces the hope that dance practices can connect diverse communities, while evading the social circumstances of white flight and racially exclusionary housing policies contributing to these historical divisions. Dance is intended to alleviate the social effects of the structural violence that predicates Kaufman's fortune. While her foundation extols the ability of dance to connect people across difference, Kaufman simultaneously was dissatisfied with UCLA because it did not center conservatory training in western concert forms. Kaufman's insistence that dance be happy suggests her desire to leave the enduring realities of racism and class stratification out of the stage light.⁵⁴

Kaufman's philanthropic giving at UCLA and USC bears a relationship to the logic of real estate development that underpins her fortune. She focuses the bulk of her resources on

funding permanent structures.⁵⁵ She provides facilities, and to a lesser extent, support for the ephemeral dance forms and people passing through them.⁵⁶ While dance schools are often rooted in lineage—founded to continue the work of a particular choreographer, form, or cultural tradition—Kaufman prefers to start a dance school out of nowhere. She remodeled a facility for a BFA program at UCLA that does not exist and started a department at USC from scratch. The dance buildings she funds mirror the logic of a subdivision, leveling an area (or a department) to plop down a new development. Rather than foreground dance traditions specific to Los Angeles (home to the legacies of Bella Lewitsky, Lester Horton, and Lula Washington, for example), Kaufman imports prestige from elsewhere.

What is Kaufman up to here? Viewed in a Bourdieuan light, Kaufman's philanthropic endeavors might function as a tool for self-aggrandizement and inflating her social position. Her activity resonates with the customary practice of the rich to use patronage to control their representation (figuring themselves as generous donors rather than as beneficiaries of exploitation). Descriptions of Kaufman's generosity abound in the reportage about her, and in 2017, *Dance Magazine* named Kaufman one of the most influential people in dance.⁵⁷ Kaufman exemplifies the bourgeois dilettantism that characterizes arts patronage since the decline of aristocratic support. As art historian Jaap van der Tas describes, these wealthy, dilettante clients understand art as a process of building character: "the associated bourgeois ideal of Bildung refers to the process of character-building through the acquisition of culture."⁵⁸ Kaufman becomes a patron of an identity, the dancer, and the mythology that the sweaty effort of technical training is a vehicle for personal development. We must think about the opportunities that Kaufman provides for dancers to develop their prowess in relation to what was taken to amass this fortune. While the programs at UCLA and USC provide dance education to a diverse and heterogeneous student body (including students of color and first generation college students), their scale is minute in comparison to the scope of Kaufman & Broad's housing developments and their material effects on the landscape.⁵⁹ Ultimately, the question of Kaufman's personal motivations for her philanthropy is peripheral to what strikes me as the more relevant question: how does philanthropy function materially in capital accumulation strategies and their reverberations at the level of urban development? One can certainly speculate about how patronage operates as a means to inflate an individual's prestige and social standing. I am not concerned with Kaufman's intentions or individual psychology, but with how such investment functions within Los Angeles and its wider economic context.

The Remaking of Downtown Los Angeles

Kaufman's dance philanthropy is nestled within broader struggles to further urban development in Los Angeles. Journalistic accounts of Kaufman's recent activity highlight how Los Angeles is emerging as a hub for premiere dance institutions. Bonnie Oda Homsey, the director of the Los Angeles Dance Foundation, described to the *LA Times* the potential of the dance program at USC: "This new school is going to put us [Los Angeles] on the map [...] Los Angeles is really poised to become a more forward-thinking dance mecca."⁶⁰ USC Dean Cutietta echoed this expectancy: "Dance is just taking off here [...] A lot of that has to do with Glorya's gift to the Music Center, and the timing is perfect now. This is the next piece of the puzzle."⁶¹ Jodie Gates used a manifest destiny metaphor to describe the allure of dance in LA: "It's covered wagon time again [...] There's opportunity in the West. Dancers are moving here to dance, and choreographers are coming here to form companies."⁶² In an interview with the *New York Times*, Kaufman described her ambition to change the representation of Los Angeles as devoid of important cultural institutions: "These dancers will be known all over the world. And L.A. will now have the

reputation of being a little more cultural. [...] You know New York and San Francisco have been putting us down forever."⁶³ In addition to funding touring dance companies at the Music Center in downtown Los Angeles, Kaufman has participated in the creation of major art institutions as a founding member of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) and a patron of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). These cultural initiatives are a part of two undertakings: to elevate the status of Los Angeles and to restructure development within the city. Understanding the wider context for Kaufman's philanthropy requires delving into the history of urban struggles in the region.

Urban scholars have characterized the history of Los Angeles as an oscillation between decentralization and re-centralization over the course of the twentieth century. From 1900 to 1925, land speculation was a chief engine of capital accumulation in Southern California.⁶⁴ The wealth derived from widespread suburban development (including the subdivision of Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley) provided the financial means to build out downtown as concentrated center of civic life.⁶⁵ In the 1920s, downtown Los Angeles functioned as a commercial hub, filled with office buildings, banks, grand hotels, restaurants, movie palaces, and streetcars.⁶⁶ Key members of the capitalist class, led by Harry Chandler of the *LA Times* fortune, invested their wealth in downtown real estate, contributing to centralization of commerce there.⁶⁷ Beginning with World War II, development began to seep west, as shopping centers and office buildings sprouted up along Wilshire Boulevard. Wealth shifted into neighborhoods on the Westside, including Beverly Hills, Bel Air, and Brentwood. In the postwar period, Los Angeles followed a pattern of residential and commercial decentralization, resulting in a decline in downtown's share of the retail trade and its property values. Urban renewal planners and developers began to hatch projects intended to re-center the city through a revitalized downtown. City officials designated Bunker Hill, a densely populated, working class immigrant neighborhood within the downtown vicinity, as a slum, slotting it for urban renewal. By the mid-1960s, bulldozers leveled Bunker Hill's apartment buildings and Victorian houses, as the neighborhood underwent a large scale redevelopment process. Modeled on New York City's Lincoln Center, which used elite cultural institutions to buttress urban renewal, wealthy patrons funded the construction of the Los Angeles Music Center, which opened in 1964 and displaced the working class immigrant cultures previously inhabiting the neighborhood.

In subsequent decades, Eli Broad took it as personal project to turn downtown Los Angeles into a cultural mecca, playing a key role in pushing through the establishment of additional cultural institutions in the former Bunker Hill. In 1979, Broad presided over the creation of the MOCA and in 1996, was the key fundraiser for the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, both on Grand Avenue. Designed to house the collection of contemporary art held by the Broad Art Foundation, the \$140 million Broad Museum opened in the fall of 2015, across the street from the MOCA. Mirroring Glorya Kaufman's intent, Broad explicitly frames this cultural offensive as a contribution to building the international profile of Los Angeles: "The museum [MOCA] would be essential if Los Angeles hoped to become an internationally respected center of the arts and benefit from all the tourism, arts education, and other opportunities that would come with that status."⁶⁸ Underpinning these projects is the desire for these institutions to give the shapeless city some coherence and cultural anchors, elevating the prestige and property values in Los Angeles. Urban historian Sharon Zukin details this strategy:

There are, moreover, special connections between artists and corporate patrons. In such cities as New York and Los Angeles, the presence of artists documents a claim to these cities' status in the global hierarchy. The display of art, for public improvement or private gain, represents an abstraction of

economic and social power. Among business elites, those from finance, insurance, and real estate are generally great patrons of both art museums and public art, as if to emphasize their prominence in the city's symbolic economy.⁶⁹

Fueled by these large scale projects, gentrification of downtown Los Angeles continues to displace lower income residents and bring in new waves of real estate speculation.⁷⁰ Mike Davis urges us to see cultural investment in the redevelopment of downtown LA as deliberate strategy within the framework of broader socio-spatial polarization within the city: "The goals of this strategy may be summarized as a double repression: to raze all association with Downtown's past and to prevent any articulation with the non-Anglo urbanity of its future."⁷¹ While these centers for contemporary art might appear as a contribution to cultural life in Los Angeles, we must attend to the race and class antagonisms that undergird the conceptions of the "public good" for the city.⁷² Capitalists and real estate speculators have long used cultural institutions to further their goals. Mike Davis describes the "real-estate/arts nexus" in the context of Los Angeles: "a wealthy institutional matrix has coalesced—integrating elite university faculties, museums, the arts press and foundations—single-mindedly directed toward the creation of a cultural monumentality to support the sale of the city to overseas investors and affluent immigrants."⁷³ Los Angeles has blurred the urban/suburban distinction, as the city itself followed a pattern of low-density development, prioritizing the single family residence as the primary housing unit. The far-flung quality of Los Angeles, its lack of a coherent center, has been a liability, and downtown redevelopment aimed to re-center the fragmented metropolis. Real estate firms, such as Kaufman & Broad, fuel investment in downtown cultural institutions, as building these art centers has become a critical component of keeping Los Angeles competitive with other metropolitan areas. Sociologist Miriam Greenberg uses the term "urban branding" to characterize how urban elites fund cultural institutions and market the distinctiveness of a city to protect their material interests, encourage tourism, and raise property values.⁷⁴

UCLA and USC have differentiated roles within Los Angeles. UCLA is a public university on the west side and surrounded by some of LA's most affluent neighborhoods including Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, and Beverly Hills. Located in a more diverse and working class part of the city, USC is a private institution whose expansion is connected to broader attempts to redevelop sections of downtown Los Angeles. While serving distinct functions within the social and economic landscape of Los Angeles, they participate alongside other cultural institutions in buttressing the city's property values and development prospects.

The circumstances of both Broad and Kaufman's philanthropy—that wealth generated through the mass production of suburban tract housing later becomes funding for contemporary art and dance institutions in an urban center—complicates the urban/suburban relationship. Kaufman & Broad made it their business to disseminate suburban housing on a large scale, encouraging the de-centralization of regional development. In the postwar period, suburbia offered peaceful, residential homes for white families, distanced from their racialized fears about urban life. Yet with this movement to the suburbs came banality, inauthenticity, and boredom. Suburbia—its site un-specificity, its "anywhere" quality, its sterile safety, its endless replication—generated the lure of the urban. The impulse to live in the city, to be proximate to art scenes and "ethnic" restaurants, in turn fuels gentrification, which David Harvey describes: "Even the incoherent, bland and monotonous suburban tract development that continues to dominate in many areas, now gets its antidote in a 'new urbanism' movement that touts the sale of community and a boutique lifestyle as a developer product to fulfill urban dreams."⁷⁵ In the case of Kaufman & Broad, the spoils of suburban development become

concentrated in an urban center and used to re-make the city in the image of elite, white interests that ultimately displace working class, immigrant communities.⁷⁶ By focusing on internationally recognized high art, the institutions spearheaded by Broad and Kaufman tend to de-prioritize cultural production specific to local communities, especially work by and for black, Latinx, and Asian American artists in Los Angeles.⁷⁷

Kaufman's dance patronage returns to the world some of the vitality stolen by unleashing landscapes of housing subdivisions. Perhaps an unconscious form of contrition, Kaufman's support for concert dance functions as an antidote to suburban banality: the unglamorous, relentlessly quantitative character of tract housing becomes transubstantiated into dance patronage. Philanthropy could provide Kaufman and Broad with a means to deflect criticism. In his piece on the opening of Eli Broad's art museum, Peter Schjeldahl asks, "Why would anyone gainsay immense wealth when looking at the delightful things that may be done with it?"⁷⁸ In addition to the ideological moves, Glorya Kaufman also has her own real estate investments to look after. Kaufman currently lives in Beverly Hills at 1140 Laurel Way, which she bought in May 2012 for \$18.2 million.⁷⁹ She previously resided at a 48-acre compound in Brentwood's Mandeville Canyon (at 3100 Mandeville Canyon Road), which was listed on the market as a \$40 million dollar estate but sold in May 2014 for \$16 million to hedge-fund manager David Ganek.⁸⁰ Likely disappointed by this loss, Kaufman has a financial stake in protecting Los Angeles' property values.

Conclusion

Charting the relationship between Kaufman & Broad's business, Glorya Kaufman's dance philanthropy, and struggles over the development of Los Angeles allows us to see a broader picture surrounding recent funding for dance in Los Angeles. In the circumstances of Kaufman's philanthropy, the racialized history of suburbanization becomes the means to assert a racialized aesthetics. The case of Kaufman's patronage has implications for thinking about the art-real estate nexus, the politics of dance patronage, and the character of Los Angeles as a place.

Forging the connection between Kaufman & Broad's subdivisions and contemporary dance in Los Angeles illuminates how patronage is bound up in real estate development, first as the means to generate the wealth that becomes patronage and second as cultural initiatives buttress property values. Sharon Zukin's scholarship demonstrates that art has a direct utility for real estate speculation, as museums, theaters, and schools become vehicles for the valorization of urban land holdings.⁸¹ Zukin's materialist geography invites us to see how cultural institutions and the built environment register the movement of capital. From this perspective, concert dance is not oppositional to capital accumulation or real estate development but a component of these processes. While some scholars assert that performance resists the commodification of the art object, we must also take note of how venues for ephemeral art forms play a role in real estate speculation.

The case of Kaufman's dance patronage provides a critical vantage point to examine the politics of cultural funding and how the material circumstances of capital accumulation, after the fact, become framed as generosity. On one hand, it is obvious that fortunes held by white beneficiaries of exploitation and racialized dispossession fund many cultural institutions. This was as true of California's robber barons of 19th century as it is today. Walter Benjamin encapsulated this social fact in the oft-quoted maxim "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."⁸² In a certain sense, my tracking of how Glorya Kaufman came to possess her wealth might seem too apparent and lacking in subtlety, like noting the mild weather in California. On

the other hand, dance scholars rarely incorporate these economic processes into analyses of concert dance. I dwell in the banal yet rarely dealt with the material conditions of dance in the hope that the familiar may begin to seem strange and, perhaps even, intolerable. I hope that *generous support* comes to seem eerie and ominous. In some respects, the details of where Kaufman's money comes from do not matter, because capital accumulation flows from the same source: exploitation. The specifics of Kaufman's case are relevant, however, to re-contextualizing celebrations of an alleged dance renaissance in Los Angeles. While the rich seek to transubstantiate their wealth into enduring civic institutions and cultural immortality, we must attend to what was involved in accumulating these fortunes and how concert dance might materialize as the fruit or flowers placed atop a capitalist system.⁸³

So long as we continue to live within a capitalist mode of production, dance, like all things, will remain bound up in the structures of exploitation that underpin our world. In response to surveying the influence of economic factors upon dance, some might seek to defend the autonomy of the medium, advocating for a good, sustainable, and just institutionality. Some might rally for an increase in public funding for the arts to curtail the influence of wealthy individuals. Some might call for a democratization of leadership at cultural institutions or a more inclusive curatorial framework. What distinguishes a Marxian perspective from these more social democratic modes is a foundational critique of capitalist accumulation.⁸⁴ Dance as an art medium is ripe with contradiction; concert dance both is and is not autonomous from capital. Rather than defending the autonomy of dance from economic incursion, I focus on the ambivalences that necessarily accompany concert dance within a capitalist context. The contradictions within the field of dance (that dancers' movements are both free and constrained) will find resolution only through a historical change in the organization of economic life more broadly.⁸⁵

Investigating where Glorya Kaufman's money comes from parallels gestures of institutional critique that have emerged within the visual arts.⁸⁶ Artists and critics have queried what the act of unveiling the economic underpinnings of art institutions does for the field and for those issuing the critique. Critic Isabelle Graw contends that art institutions have incorporated and neutralized forms of critical practice.⁸⁷ Graw's perspective illuminates how critiques can re-sanctify the institution and serve as a mode of gaining notoriety within art fields. In an interview, the French conceptual artist Daniel Buren gives an account of drafting a letter of protest against the sponsorship of an exhibit by the tobacco company Philip Morris:

But you know, was it all a storm in a tea cup. Artists refused to sign, they said it was all insane or meaningless, too specific, too passive, if we attack Philip Morris, why not this or that company or trustee. And we are all a part of this world, aren't we? And so on and so on, as we all know it too well! The situation just got worse and worse, compromised by a general acceptance of the status quo. Discouraging!⁸⁸

Buren's narrative points to the difficulty of defining the boundaries of critique, which can result in political resignation. In writing about critical art practices, Andrea Fraser defines institutional critique as "a methodology of critical reflexive site-specificity," which invites the artist to reflect on how the object of critique is also within oneself.⁸⁹ She notes how the art field is not simply composed of established museums, but involves many participants who make up the social relations surrounding art.⁹⁰ For Fraser, institutional critique can involve a splitting off of unwanted aspects of ourselves onto an external object—the museum, the corporate sponsor, or the patron, for example. Reflecting on how one participates in institutions is at the core of critical art practice. Fraser advocates for a

recognition by artists of their role in the legitimization of capital accumulation that funds art institutions:

If our only choice is to participate in this economy or abandon the art field entirely, at least we can stop rationalizing that participation in the name of critical or political art practices or—adding insult to injury—social justice. Any claim that we represent a progressive social force while our activities are directly subsidized by the engines of inequality can only contribute to the justification of that inequality—the (not so) new legitimization function of art museums.⁹¹

Fraser responds here to those that frame institutional critique as impotent, self-serving, or leading to a resigned complacency. Fraser encourages artists to not shroud their work in the language of social justice and avoid confronting the economic relations at play within contemporary art.⁹² Reflective of her own ambivalent position, Fraser currently is the chair of UCLA's art department housed within the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Center. Practices of institutional critique often open further swirls of ambiguity, as critical artists ascend in the art world and sell their work to wealthy collectors for large sums of money. While strategies in the visual arts are by no means a model to be glorified, they invite us to critically examine our institutional location and sit with the contradictions of our economic context. The field of dance has yet to have a significant wave of institutional critique. Perhaps this methodology can offer a way of engaging more fully with concert dance's (often contradictory) work in the world.

As Kaufman & Broad has been headquartered in Los Angeles since 1963 and Glorya Kaufman has devoted her philanthropy to the city, I want to turn to Los Angeles as both the site of this study and a character within it. What kind of place do we think Los Angeles is? What illusions do we have about California? California holds something particular for the larger American imaginary: it functions as a projection screen for collective hopes, dreams, and aspirations. The mythology of California as a place of golden sunshine, easily found riches, and outdoor splendor keeps us wedded to the settler project: that we, too, can get ours. The westward movement of American settlement was deeply motivated by land speculation and the hope that anything can grow within Californian soil. Mike Davis describes how central real estate development has been to California's history: "Los Angeles was first and above all the creature of real-estate capitalism: the culminating speculation, in fact, of the generations of boosters and promoters who had subdivided and sold the West from the Cumberland Gap to the Pacific."⁹³ In addition to illuminating how important the creation of a city mythology was to land speculation, Davis offers a central dialectic to understand the city: sunshine and noir.⁹⁴ For Davis, the dialectical tension between sun-kissed, shining affluence and the repressed reality of swindle, class struggle, and racism offers an epistemological frame to grasp Los Angeles. In her take on the city, Joan Didion encapsulates Los Angeles as "a city not only largely conceived as a series of real estate promotions but largely supported by a series of confidence games, a city currently afloat on motion pictures and junk bonds and the B-2 Stealth bomber."⁹⁵ The city, in its "double role of utopia and dystopia," functions as a metonym for capitalism as a whole.⁹⁶ Within this frame, endless subdivisions of tract housing and Glorya Kaufman's dilettantish philanthropy fit right into city, allowing us to see more clearly the character of Los Angeles as "a bright, guilty place."⁹⁷

I completed my doctorate in the World Arts and Cultures/Dance department at UCLA in the fall of 2017. This essay is, in part, a way of digesting my time in Kaufman Hall, the seven years I spent walking past the bust of Glorya Kaufman. The department paid me approximately \$10,000 per year to work as a teaching assistant. Not able to afford rent on the west side of Los Angeles, I lived in gentrifying neighborhoods on the east side, taking a long bus ride along Sunset Boulevard to campus each day. I began to research Glorya

Kaufman as a way of answering many questions that nagged me as a graduate student. Why are graduate student workers paid so little but surrounded by white marble? Why is Los Angeles so spread out? Why do I feel alienated in this building and in Westwood more broadly? I noticed the headquarters of KB Home on Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood not far from campus and began to wonder about the connections. Writing this essay has been a process of sitting with my own fantasies about what going to grad school, studying dance, and moving to Los Angeles would entail. I direct this essay not at Kaufman in particular, but at the ways we daily maintain this unjustifiable world.

I thank Eunsong Kim, JJ Mull, and my two anonymous readers for their thoughtful feedback.

Notes

1. The term “art washing” has emerged in critical discourse in the last several years to illustrate the use of art and culture in urban redevelopment projects. See Feargus O’Sullivan, “The Pernicious Realities of ‘Artwashing,’” *CityLab*, June 24, 2014, <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2014/06/the-pernicious-realities-of-artwashing/373289/>; Rafael Schacter, “The Ugly Truth: Street Art, Graffiti and the Creative City,” *Art & the Public Sphere* 3, no. 2 (2014): 161–76. Within the context of Los Angeles, a coalition called the Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement (BHAAAD) began organizing in 2016 against gentrification in their neighborhood by protesting galleries and art spaces that fuel speculative real estate investment and raise rents for low-income residents. See *Boyle Heights Alianza Anti-Artwashing Y Desplazamiento*, <http://alianzacontraartwashing.org/en/bhaaad/>; Janna Graham, “A Strong Curatorial Vision for the Neighbourhood: Countering the Diplomatic Condition of the Arts in Urban Neighbourhoods,” *Art & the Public Sphere* 6, no. 1/2 (2017): 33–49. ↗
2. For example, see Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2010); Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism / Performing Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995). ↗
3. These three types of autonomy are formulated in Andrea Fraser, “A ‘Sensation’ Chronicle,” *Social Text* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 127–56. ↗
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). ↗
5. See Jo-Anne Berelowitz, “Protecting High Culture in Los Angeles: MOCA and the Ideology of Urban Redevelopment,” *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 1 (1993): 149–57; Nizan Shaked, “Something out of Nothing: Marcia Tucker, Jeffrey Deitch and the De-Regulation of the Contemporary Museum Model,” *East of Borneo*, July 16, 2012, <https://eastofborneo.org/archives/something-out-of-nothing-marcia-tucker-jeffrey-deitch-and-the-de-regulation-of-the-contemporary-museum-model/>; Kazys Varnelis, “One Thing After Another,” *Log* 3 (2004): 109–15. ↗
6. Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Linda J. Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Divides in American Dance, 1890-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Linda J. Tomko, “Considering Causation and Conditions of Possibility: Practitioners and Patrons of New Dance in Progressive-Era America,” in *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*, ed.

Alexandra Carter (New York: Routledge, 2013), 80–93; Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1998). 

7. Sally Banes, "Introduction," *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 95. 
8. Banes edited an issue of the *Dance Chronicle* in 2002 under the heading, "Where They Danced: Patrons, Institutions, Spaces," featuring articles on the relationship between state sponsorship, dance genre, and national identity; how specific venues developed into hubs for experimental dance; the discursive construction of the medium that allowed dance to enter the university; and the role of private philanthropy in supporting dance companies. See Purnima Shah, "State Patronage in India: Appropriation of the 'Regional' and 'National,'" *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 125–41; Sally Banes, "Choreographing Community: Dancing in the Kitchen," *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 143–61; Janice Ross, "Institutional Forces and the Shaping of Dance in the American University," *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 115–24; Lynn Garafola, "Dollars for Dance: Lincoln Kirstein, City Center, and the Rockefeller Foundation," *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 101–14. 
9. For example, Garafola writes, "Founded in 1913 with an endowment of \$182 million, the Rockefeller Foundation was among the country's outstanding philanthropic institutions, closely identified with medical research and with education." Garafola, "Dollars for Dance," 103. 
10. In an essay on the role that universities have played as patrons for avant-garde performance in the US, Banes includes a footnote stating, "I am grateful to Philip Auslander for suggesting that a 'real estate theory' would partly explain the economic base for postwar avant-garde performance activities in New York (personal communication)." I expand upon this brief reference to the role of real estate speculation in performance patronage and consider its implications for concert dance as a whole. See Sally Banes, "Institutionalizing Avant-Garde Performance: A Hidden History of University Patronage in the United States," in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality*, ed. James Martin Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 235. 
11. See, for example, Anna C. Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place," *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 3 (2008): 466–86; Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007); Nizan Shaked, "Splitting the Public and Private Uses of Art," *Counterpunch*, 2015, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/02/20/splitting-the-public-and-private-uses-of-art/>. 
12. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Boston: South End Press, 2007), 3–4. 
13. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "In the Shadow of the Shadow State," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Boston: South End Press, 2007), 46. 
14. George Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire: Work, Machines, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2013), 7. 
15. Her mother worked as a seamstress in a factory, and her father was a production manager for *Automotive News*. Patrick Cole, "Dancing Philanthropist Gives \$6 Million to Alvin Ailey Troupe," *Bloomberg News* (blog), May 21, 2009. 
16. Michael Seiler, "2 Victims of Plane Crash Near Camarillo Identified," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1983. 

17. Bernard Weinraub, "Power Meets Modern Art in Los Angeles," *New York Times*, November 26, 2001. [D](#)
18. "The Cunning of the Hedgehog: For Eli Broad, Head of SunAmerica, It Was Enough to Have One Big Idea," *The Economist*, September 27, 1997. [D](#)
19. Eli Broad, *The Art of Being Unreasonable: Lessons in Unconventional Thinking* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 4. [D](#)
20. Broad, *The Art of Being Unreasonable*, 15. [D](#)
21. Leibowitz, "Committee of One," 52. [D](#)
22. Richard A. Walker and Michael K. Heiman, "Quiet Revolution for Whom?" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 71, no. 1 (1981): 70. [D](#)
23. David Callahan, *The Givers: Wealth, Power, and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2017), 104. [D](#)
24. Seiler, "2 Victims of Plane Crash." [D](#)
25. As a means to diversify their business, Kaufman & Broad expanded into other industries including cable and insurance. This functioned to provide some alternatives should a downturn in the housing market threaten their trade. They created a subsidiary cable company called Nation Wide Cablevision in 1966, which they sold six years later to Tele-Communications Inc. In 1971, Broad bought a life insurance company, Sun Life Insurance, as means to ride out the economic crisis of the early 1970s. Kaufman & Broad eventually separated SunAmerica into a separate entity in 1989. Broad sold SunAmerica to the insurance firm American International Group (AIG) in 1999 at a large profit. Eli Broad, "My Favorite Mistake," *Newsweek*, May 21, 2012. [D](#)
26. Overaccumulation refers to economic crises caused by the production of more capital than can be reinvested, as Harvey details:

A contradiction arises *within* the capitalist class because individual capitalists, each acting purely in his or her own self-interest in a context of competitive profit-seeking, produce a result which is antagonistic to their own class interest. Marx's analyses suggest that this contradiction creates a persistent tendency towards 'overaccumulation,' which is defined as a condition in which too much capital is produced relative to the opportunities to find profitable employment for that capital. The tendency towards overaccumulation is manifest in periodic crises marked by falling profits, idle productive capacity, over-production of commodities, unemployment, idle money capital, and the like.

David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 79–80. [D](#)

27. Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 86. [D](#)
28. See also David Harvey, "Class-Monopoly Rent, Finance Capital and the Urban Revolution," *Regional Studies* 8, no. 3–4 (1974): 239–55; David Harvey, "The Political Economy of Urbanization: the Case of the United States," in *The Social Economy of Cities*, ed. Gary Gappert and Harold M. Rose (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975). [D](#)
29. Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4–5. [D](#)

30. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 53. 
31. Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009), 3-6. 
32. Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 4. 
33. Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), xiv. 
34. Avila, *Popular Culture*, xv. 
35. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990), 6. 
36. The trusts were heavily invested in the American Insurance Group (AIG), whose collapse and near-collapse in 2008 proved to be a large financial blow to Glorya Kaufman. Her losses prompted Kaufman to launch an unsuccessful legal campaign to recoup the investment, as business journalist Alexa Hyland details: "Kaufman said her husband's trusts lost more than \$50 million when the government pumped billions into the insurer a year ago to stave off its failure, taking a huge equity stake that dropped existing AIG shares to a fraction of their former value. Kaufman, a beneficiary of the trusts, thinks the losses were unnecessary, and she is fighting mad. She is waging a legal battle against co-trustees JP Morgan Chase and LA attorney Edward Laundry, claiming in an LA probate court lawsuit that they have taken steps to stop the losses by 'swiftly moving to sell the AIG stock.' Kaufman also claims the trusts held 'unreasonably large amounts of the stock.'" Alexa Hyland, "Charitable Efforts Left Wanting? Philanthropist Goes to Court over Losses from Meltdown of AIG," *Los Angeles Business Journal*, September 21, 2009. 
37. Deborah Vankin, "Glorya Kaufman Gives USC Millions to Build a Dance School," *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/nov/09/entertainment/la-et-cm-glorya-kaufman-gives-usc-millions-to-build-a-dance-school-20121109>. 
38. Pamela Diamond, "Record Donation Revives UCLA Dance," *Dance Magazine* 74, no. 3 (March 1, 2000): 45-46. 
39. Michael Webb, "Seismic Shift," *Architectural Review* 219, no. 1308 (February 2006): 58-61. 
40. Deborah Vankin, "To Glorya Kaufman, the Art of Dance Is a Gift on Several Levels," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/01/entertainment/la-et-cm-glorya-kaufman-2-20121202>. 
41. "The Philanthropist Glorya Kaufman's Gift to U.S.C. Dance," *New York Times*, January 11, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/13/arts/dance/the-philanthropist-glorya-kaufmans-gift-to-usc-dance.html>. 
42. UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, "Brief History," accessed July 1, 2018, <https://www.wacd.ucla.edu/brief-history>. 
43. Allegra Fuller Snyder, who was an assistant professor in dance, describes the formation of UCLA's Ethnic Arts Program:

1972-The campus was hit by student revolutions for "more relevant Education".... The Dance Department took a leadership role in creating an interdepartmental, intercollege program, contributed to by six

departments and two colleges: Dance, Ethnomusicology, Anthropology, Folk Lore and Mythology, Art, and Theater, all from both the Colleges of Arts and Humanities. I took on the role of Coordinator of what was to be called the Ethnic Arts Program, which was to be administered through the Dance Department (renamed World Arts and Cultures in 1983).

(Allegra Fuller Snyder, "UCLA Department of Dance From 1960–1990," The Dance History Project of Southern California, May 12, 2012, <http://www.dancehistoryproject.org/articles/recollections/ucla-department-of-dance-from-1960-1990/>.)

Students of color continued to protest the Eurocentric arts curriculum and lack of diversity in faculty appointments into the 1990s, as the *New York Times* reports: "Students are merging art and activism on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles, where a black acting group has staged a performance protest to dramatize what it sees as the school's culturally lopsided arts division." ("Campus Life: U.C.L.A.; Theater Students Create a Protest Out of Their Art," *New York Times*, November 25, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/25/style/campus-life-ucla-theater-students-create-a-protest-out-of-their-art.html>). 

44. Victoria Looseleaf and Allan Ullrich, "L.A. Report: The Language of Curves," *Dance Magazine* 78, no. 11 (November 1, 2004): 17–18. 
45. "The Philanthropist Glorya Kaufman's Gift." 
46. "The Philanthropist Glorya Kaufman's Gift." 
47. Brian Seibert, "Glorya Kaufman School of Dance Adds a New Dimension to Arts in Los Angeles," *The New York Times*, August 26, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/arts/dance/glorya-kaufman-school-of-dance-adds-a-new-dimension-to-arts-in-los-angeles.html>. 
48. Jean Lenihan, "Inside the \$46-Million USC Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center," *KCET*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/usc-glorya-kaufman-dance-center-robert-cutietta-william-forsythe-jodie-gates>. 
49. USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance, "Our Visionary Founder," accessed July 1, 2018, <https://kaufman.usc.edu/about/founder/>. 
50. Vankin, "To Glorya Kaufman, the Art of Dance Is a Gift." 
51. Vankin, "To Glorya Kaufman, the Art of Dance Is a Gift." 
52. "The Philanthropist Glorya Kaufman's Gift." 
53. Glorya Kaufman, "Glorya Kaufman Dance Foundation," 2018, <http://www.thegloryakaufmandancefoundation.org/>. 
54. "At a performance, everyone in the audience has problems—so do the dancers. But for an hour and a half," she {Kaufman} says, "everyone forgets their problems and enjoys a meaningful piece of art. I'm so grateful to be in a place to be able to share this with everyone." Vankin, "Glorya Kaufman Gives USC Millions." 
55. At Juilliard, Kaufman funded the construction of a glass-walled dance studio that overlooks Broadway in Manhattan. 
56. Kaufman has donated to Inner City Arts, the Dizzy Feet Foundation, and Ailey Camp as well as funded four scholarships for dancers in the Ailey/Fordham BFA in Dance program. Kaufman, "Glorya Kaufman Dance Foundation." 
57. Jennifer Stahl, "The Most Influential People in Dance Today: Glorya Kaufman," *Dance Magazine* (blog), June 19, 2017, <https://www.dancemagazine.com/the-most-influential-people-in-dance-today-glorya-kaufman-2442318440.html>. 
58. Jaap van der Tas, "Dilettantism and Academies of Art: The Netherlands Example," in *Paying the Piper: Causes and Consequences of Art Patronage*, ed. Judith H. Balfé (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 37. 

59. The USC dance program admits between 15 and 33 students per year. UCLA's department does not disclose any demographic information about their student body. [D](#)
60. Vankin, "Glorya Kaufman Gives USC Millions." [D](#)
61. Vankin, "Glorya Kaufman Gives USC Millions." [D](#)
62. Seibert, "Glorya Kaufman School of Dance Adds a New Dimension." [D](#)
63. "The Philanthropist Glorya Kaufman's Gift." [D](#)
64. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 105. [D](#)
65. Mike Davis, *Dead Cities: And Other Tales* (New York: New Press, 2002), 143–144. [D](#)
66. Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 55. [D](#)
67. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 71. "Chandler led the syndicates that financed the Biltmore Hotel (with Letts and the Chaffeys) and the Subway Terminal Building (with Sartori), as well as promoting improvements (Coliseum, Union Station, Civic Center, and so on) that reinforced Downtown property values in general." Davis, *City of Quartz*, 117. [D](#)
68. Broad, The Art of Being Unreasonable, 59. [D](#)
69. Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (New York: Wiley, 1996), 23. [D](#)
70. For data on displacement in Los Angeles, see M. Zuk and K. Chapple, "Urban Displacement Project," UC Berkeley, 2015, <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/>. For an account of gentrification in Los Angeles, see Jan Lin, *Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism, and Gentrification in Los Angeles* (New York: New York University Press, 2019). For analysis of gentrification more broadly, see Peter Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* (New York: Nation Books, 2017); Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (New York: Routledge, 2005). [D](#)
71. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 229. "The current Culture boom, and its attendant celebrity-intellectual influx, therefore, must be seen as an epiphenomenon of the larger social polarization that has revitalized Downtown and enriched the Westside at the expense of vast debilitated tracts of the inner city." Davis, *City of Quartz*, 78. [D](#)
72. Davis writes,

At immense public cost, the corporate headquarters and financial district was shifted from the old Broadway-Spring corridor six blocks west to the greenfield site created by destroying the Bunker Hill residential neighborhood. [...] Los Angeles's redevelopers viewed property values in the old Broadway core as irreversibly eroded by the area's very centrality to public transport, and especially by its heavy use by Black and Mexican poor. [...] redevelopment massively reproduced spatial apartheid. The moat of the Harbor Freeway and the regraded palisades of Bunker Hill cut off the new financial core from the poor immigrant neighborhoods that surround it on every side. Along the base of California Plaza, Hill Street became a local Berlin Wall separating the publicly subsidized luxury of Bunker Hill from the lifeworld of Broadway, now reclaimed by Latino immigrants as their primary shopping and entertainment street. [...] The occasional appearance of a destitute street nomad in Broadway Plaza or in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art sets off a quiet panic; video cameras turn on their mounts and security guards adjust their belts. [...]

The persistence of thousands of street people on the fringes of Bunker Hill and the Civic Center sours the image of designer Downtown living and betrays the laboriously constructed illusion of a Downtown 'renaissance'. City Hall then retaliates with its own variant of low-intensity warfare. (Davis, *City of Quartz*, 230–2.)



73. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 22.
74. Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 10.
75. David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 32.
76. "Despite the spatial discrepancy between the monumentality of the new downtown and the decentralized, low-density development of its surrounding urban region, the postwar makeover of downtown Los Angeles reveals the extent to which urban planners predicated their redevelopment efforts on a set of values similar to that which guided suburban development." Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 62.
77. As counter-examples, see Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Raúl Homero Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).
78. Peter Schjeldahl, "Going Downtown: Eli Broad Opens His Own Museum in Los Angeles," *The New Yorker*, September 28, 2015.
79. Vankin, "To Glorya Kaufman, the Art of Dance Is a Gift."
80. Mark David, "Glorya Kaufman Sells Canyon Estate at Discount," *Variety* (blog), November 18, 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/dirt/real-estalker/glorya-kaufman-sells-canyon-estate-at-discount-1201356961/>.
81. Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 177.
82. Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 256.
83. Or in Andrea Fraser's language, "We must insist that what art works are economically centrally determines what they mean socially and also artistically." Fraser, "L'1% C'est Moi," *Texte Zur Kunst* 83 (September 2011): 124.
84. Shannon Jackson, for example, argues not for aesthetic autonomy but an embrace of institutional and infrastructural support for performance. See Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Jackson's analysis aligns with a social democratic politics of public provision, rather than with a Marxist framework for which capital, the state, and the "public good" are fundamental problems.
85. Art critic Gene Ray succinctly formulates this position: "In political terms, there are at this point just two irreconcilable options: either to be enlisted in culture's affirmative function—to justify a society with no justification' (Debord, 1994: 138)—or to press forward with the revolutionary process.... The radical alternative is the supersession (dépassement; that is, Aufhebung) of art." Gene Ray, "Towards a Critical Art Theory," in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009), 86.
86. Artists associated with institutional critique have developed practices that challenge specific patrons and their means of capital accumulation. In 1969, the Guerrilla Art Action Group and the Art Workers Coalition called for the immediate resignation of the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art on the grounds that the family used art to disguise their war profiteering in Vietnam. Hans

Haacke's work explores the financial structures backing cultural institutions, challenging the function of patronage as a corporate public relations scheme and a means of urban redevelopment. Artists are currently objecting to the entrenchment of museum boards with the Trump administration. See Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009); Andrea Fraser, "Philanthropy and Plutocracy," *October* 162 (Fall 2017): 31–38; Raunig and Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*; John C. Welchman, ed., *Institutional Critique and After* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006). [D](#)

87. Isabelle Graw, "Beyond Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, 139. [D](#)

88. Maria Eichhorn, "On the Avertissement: Interview with Daniel Buren," in *Institutional Critique and After*, 120. [D](#)

89. Andrea Fraser, "What Is Institutional Critique?," in *Institutional Critique and After*, 305. [D](#)

90. Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique*, 409. [D](#)

91. Fraser, "L'1% C'est Moi," 124. [D](#)

92. Andrea Fraser begins her essay "L'1% C'est Moi" with the questions, "How do the world's leading collectors earn their money? How do their philanthropic activities relate to their economic operations?" Andrea Fraser, "L'1% C'est Moi," 114. [D](#)

93. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 25. [D](#)

94. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 23. [D](#)

95. Joan Didion, "After Henry," in *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live: Collected Nonfiction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 653. [D](#)

96. Joan Didion, "After Henry," 18. [D](#)

97. Davis, *Dead Cities*, 119. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Olive McKeon

Mckeon

Olive McKeon is a dancer and researcher who writes on the intersections between Marxism, feminism, and dance studies. She completed her doctorate at the University of California, Los Angeles, writing a dissertation on historical materialist approaches to modern dance history. She has danced with the choreographers Abby Crain, Hana van der Kolk, Sophia Wang, and Jmy James Kidd. She lives in Oakland and teaches in the Critical Studies department at the California College of the Arts.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Marina Tyquiengco, "Indigenous Cosmopolitanism: The Alaska Native Heritage Center," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.5>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Indigenous Cosmopolitanism: The Alaska Native Heritage Center

Marina Tyquiengco

ABSTRACT The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is a living heritage center located in Anchorage, Alaska. Although there are many tourist destinations in Alaska, Denali National Park for example, Anchorage should be thought of as the cosmopolitan center of Alaska, its largest and most populous city. The Alaska Native Heritage Center is an expansive site with indoor and outdoor components focusing on history and contemporary culture. The Heritage Center was initiated and curated by Alaska Natives as opposed to anthropologists or historians. The site as a whole can thus be understood as authored by Alaska Natives. The visitor experience, story of the center, and location provide many ways to bridge the site with the concept of cosmopolitanism. As I have experienced the site as a visitor, I will consider the center in relation to the notion of cosmopolitan curiosity, particularly in conjunction with scholar Natasha Eaton's concept of cosmopolitan nostalgia. The ANHC serves as symbol of contemporary self-definition of Indigenous peoples. By placing the center in Anchorage, the Heritage Center founders were making a conscious choice to share their history and culture with non-natives. This enacts their sense of belonging in the world relating to cultural theorist Anthony Kwame Appiah's central thesis of cosmopolitanism in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). Although not everyone has the opportunity to visit Alaska, those who do are likely to travel to Anchorage and once there to visit the ANHC. Due to colonization, indigenous peoples of the United States make up an extremely small percentage of the population, yet by no means are they—as outmoded anthropological monographs attest—'disappearing'. By highlighting a contemporary example of indigenous living culture, I would like to consider how cosmopolitanism as a concept can incorporate this Indigenous mode of being into its larger global story.

We need these traditions, not only to know who we are, but to know who we can become.¹

Margaret Nelson, the former President and CEO of the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC), made the above statement in *Qayaqs & Canoes: Native Ways of Knowing*, a 2001 publication detailing a yearlong collaborative boat-building project at the center. The ANHC is a nonprofit heritage center located in Anchorage, Alaska, created to celebrate the cultures of Alaska's Indigenous peoples, known as Alaska Natives.² Nelson's statement demonstrates the perspective that tradition should be instructive and future-oriented, making a place like the ANHC especially important for Alaska Natives. That said, the Alaska Native Heritage Center thrives as a site for non-Native tourists visiting Alaska. For its tourism and traditional teaching functions and the particularity of its founding, the ANHC should be understood as a site of indigenous cosmopolitanism.

Today more than 100,000 Alaska Natives live in Alaska and comprise roughly 10 percent of the state population, making them an important minority population.³ Although it opened to the public in 1999, the Alaska Native Heritage Center was conceptualized much earlier; the center was the result of a decade of planning.⁴ The Alaska Federation of Natives, the largest and most powerful statewide organization representing Alaska Native interests, approved by unanimous vote the concept for a culture center for Alaska Natives from all over the state in 1987.⁵ The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) was formally founded in 1989 as a nonprofit and from 1989 to 1999, the ANHC raised a total of \$14.5 million in funds from local, state, federal, and private sources.⁶ According to its website, "A 30-member Academy comprised of Elders and Tradition Bearers was formed

to help guide the Heritage Center staff in program and building design.⁷ The current staff members are identified on the website with their name, title, and Alaska Native culture's name if they are Alaska Native such as "Loren Anderson, Director of Culture Programs, Alutiiq."⁸ The majority of the board and the staff—12 of the 14 member board and 13 of the 16 employees—are identified as one or more Alaska Native culture, only one staff member is Native American from outside Alaska.⁹ From this information, I argue that the Alaska Native Heritage Center was initiated, curated, and is now run by Alaska Natives rather than non-native anthropologists or historians, as is the case for many cultural heritage sites. The center should thus be understood as broadly authored by Alaska Natives.

Figure 1. Map of the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Visitors' Guide, The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.

Figure 2. Traditional territories of Alaska Native Cultures Map, The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.

Figure 3. Exterior of Main Building of Alaska Native Heritage Center, The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is an architecturally and conceptually expansive site meant to cater to diverse audiences. The center is open to the public seasonally, typically from Mother's Day to Labor Day, which is peak tourist season in Alaska.¹⁰ It occupies a twenty-six acre site with indoor and outdoor components focusing on history and culture (Figure 1).¹¹ The eleven major Alaska Native cultures are organized into five groups based on traditional territories and lifestyles: Athabascan, Unangax and Alutiiq (Sugpiaq), Yu'pik and Cu'pik, Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yu'pik, and Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian (Figure 2).¹² The Village Sites, full-size traditional dwellings of each cultural grouping, take up the majority of the utilized outdoor space. The main building, or indoor component, is composed of a "Gathering Place" for talks and performances, a theater, and the Hall of Cultures (Figure 3). There is also a gift shop to the left of the entrance specializing in Alaska Native-made art and crafts. The main building also houses classrooms that are not part of the visitor experience. They are used for year-round enrichment programs for children from the Anchorage area as well as summer artist residencies and internships for high school students from all regions of Alaska. Despite its breadth and high volume of visitors, the Alaska Native Heritage Center has not yet been the subject of any extensive academic scholarship.¹³ Its founding did not prompt diverse critical responses such as those that occurred after the 2004 opening of the National

Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Washington, D.C.¹⁴ The various critiques of the NMAI were linked by some to its location in the capital of the United States¹⁵ and its (initially) sanitized, uncritical perspective US history in relation to Native peoples.¹⁶ By comparison, the Alaska Native Heritage Center has been discussed relatively positively by a few scholars in the years after its initial opening.

Despite its relatively small population, Alaska is important for its vast size, oil resources, and tourism industry. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline, built from 1974–77, sparked an oil boom in Alaska that greatly increased state revenue and brought some individuals immense wealth.¹⁷ Anchorage became the de facto urban center and the recipient of much of the state's newfound wealth, especially in terms of arts and culture.¹⁸ As the state of Alaska is comprised mostly of small villages, Anchorage's population of nearly 300,000 is over 40 percent of the state's total population.¹⁹ Anchorage should be understood as the cosmopolitan center of Alaska, its major city with many museums and variety of recreational offerings not found in most of Alaska.²⁰ Similar to Robin Delugan's assessment of San Francisco as an "epicenter of national and international indigenous activism," Anchorage has become the epicenter of culture in Alaska.²¹ The Alaska Native Heritage Center has greatly contributed to the cultural tourism landscape of Anchorage and benefitted from its existence, demonstrated by the choice to locate the center in the city, rather than a more geographically central location in the state.

By situating Anchorage, the city, as a cosmopolitan center, I am seeking to situate the Alaska Native Heritage Center as a site of cosmopolitanism, as it acts as a center of living culture.²² The cosmopolitanism of the Alaska Native Heritage Center is two-fold; based on its stated purpose and authorship, the ANHC is a site of indigenous cosmopolitanism and appeals to a kind of cosmopolitan curiosity based on the tourist experience of the center. As there is limited scholarship about the center, I will use my own experience as visitor at the site to consider the ANHC in terms of nostalgia and cosmopolitan curiosity. The ANHC as a site of cosmopolitan curiosity adheres to Natasha Eaton's term "modernist nostalgia," meaning, "a return to mythic memory (as opposed to History) and a certain empathy for timeless yet fragile primitive cultures."²³ However, once at the site, the conceptualized timelessness of Alaska Natives is effectively shattered. For my discussion of cosmopolitan curiosity, I turn broadly to Anthony Kwame Appiah, cited by many scholars for his critical work on cosmopolitanism.²⁴ Indigenous cosmopolitanism is distinct from Appiah's conception of it and has been addressed recently by many scholars including Maximilian Forte and Robin Delugan. To give proper attention to these two strands of cosmopolitanism, I will discuss indigenous cosmopolitanism conceptually and how it is evoked at the ANHC. I will also consider the concepts of heritage and tradition and how they are central to this definition of indigenous cosmopolitanism.

Indigeneity and Hospitality

To many indigenous peoples, indigeneity and cosmopolitanism, which can certainly include hospitality, are intimately linked in practice if not specifically named as such.²⁵ Alexis Celeste Bunten, an Alaska Native scholar and anthropologist, has argued that the ANHC is the major site of cultural tourism for Alaska Native cultures.²⁶ In Bunten's work, the ANHC is not a major topic, but a reference point for the potential scale and draw of cultural tourism.²⁷ Bunten approaches cultural heritage in part from a Marxist perspective, questioning the commodification of Alaska Native identity and people, yet acknowledges the tangible financial and cultural benefits.²⁸ Her approach does not interrogate heritage, but instead considers heritage as a given for the cultural tourism generally. One of the ANHC's key terms is "heritage," and its meaning in relation to the site is fundamental to understanding the center overall. James Clifford, an anthropologist who

has written extensively on indigeneity, briefly discussed the Alaska Native Heritage Center five years after it opened, honing in on its heritage work.²⁹ Clifford writes, “Broadly defined, heritage work includes oral-historical research, cultural evocation and explanation (exhibits, festivals, publications, films, tourist sites), language description and pedagogy, community-based archaeology, art production, marketing, and criticism.”³⁰ In this definition, heritage work is wide-ranging and the ANHC engages with many of the activities listed by Clifford. For Clifford, the site is significant because it is Alaska Native-run and not dependent on academic experts and generally, he views the site very favorably.³¹ Perhaps important to consider is that heritage work does not necessarily need to be done *by* people of the heritage that is portrayed. The first few activities listed, “oral-historical research, cultural evocation and explanation,” are familiar as practices of anthropology. Until quite recently, anthropologists were typically not descended from or related to the people they studied; often anthropologists were Euro-American and studied non-European peoples globally.³²

Clifford provides a list of heritage work activities but, within that article, does not deeply consider their impact, generally or specifically through the ANHC. Art historian Nadia Sethi, who specializes in Alaska Native art, has argued that heritage centers in Alaska can “work to reclaim knowledge about Indigenous culture that has sometimes been controlled or silenced by dominant cultures,” pointing to the decolonial possibilities of this heritage.³³ Heritage centers in the US, including the ANHC, still operate broadly in the context of the dominant Euro-American culture. Anthropologist Michael F. Brown, considering heritage from an ethical perspective, argues that, “Cultural heritage, whether embodied in places or stories, is a shape-shifting, protean thing whose contours may be contested even by those who create it.”³⁴ Brown points out that the work of a heritage center need not be onerous and that different individuals of the same heritage might have different beliefs about its depiction or study of it. As mentioned above, the ANHC was initially founded as a gathering place for Alaska Native groups, a somewhat modest and insular goal in comparison to its current state. Although the ANHC still serves as a gathering place for Alaska Native peoples’ festivals and events, its activities are expansive and serve an audience of non-indigenous Alaskans and tourists from outside of the state. Heritage as defined by the ANHC, or its founders and current employees, is forward-thinking, bringing these markers of heritage to future generations through education, and historical, highlighting traditional lifeways, beliefs, and cultural objects.³⁵ This concept of heritage necessitates a discussion of tradition, central to the ANHC.

The mission statement of the Alaska Native Heritage Center is, “Preserves and strengthens the traditions, languages, and art of Alaska’s Native People through statewide collaboration, celebration, and education.”³⁶ From this statement, tradition can mean all attributes outside of the languages and arts that characterize Alaska Native cultures, anything from activities to food, song, dance, or clothing. Returning to Sethi, tradition can be conceptualized as “the characteristics that make a culture distinct.”³⁷ A useful definition, provided in the context of Alaska Native art, is that “tradition is the dynamic enactment of values and forms (what folklorists refer to as expressive culture) by all human beings.”³⁸ This fits with Brown’s notion of heritage as protean, that tradition is not static but dynamic. The goal of strengthening traditions rather than just preserving them coincides with this dynamic possibility for tradition. Scholar Ian McLean, who works primarily on Indigenous art, has argued that, “Tradition is only of any use if it is a launching pad into, and a way of engaging with, the contemporary globalizing world.”³⁹ This is a rather negative way to view tradition, but it nonetheless still fits with the ANHC. By pursuing the continuation of tradition through “collaboration, celebration, and education,” the ANHC is using tradition, the specific traditions of different Alaska Native cultures to connect with the larger world.⁴⁰ The tourism and outward facing components are the

major activities of the site, but not by any means its only activity. The focus on language learning and teaching traditional ways of making to younger generations express a belief in the intrinsic value of tradition at the ANHC.

The emphasis of the mission on preservation of language specifically is understandable considering the current demographics of Alaska Native peoples. The eleven major Alaska Native cultures listed above speak twenty distinct languages and of these, seventeen of them have fewer than three hundred remaining fluent speakers.⁴¹ Instead of the people “disappearing” or dying out, there is the real danger of languages dying out based on so few speakers. The Language Project at the ANHC is the result of a grant project to survey the language landscape of Alaska and then use this information to connect Alaska Natives in Anchorage with resources throughout the state.⁴² The ANHC hosts language camps, gatherings held in Alaska Native languages to help speakers and learners utilize these language skills.⁴³ Language learning is a tangible, easily measured way to achieve the ANHC’s goals. Language and its preservation are highlighted in the mission, but traditions and art are equally important and comprise a larger part of the center’s current programs.

Moving beyond the mission of the center, it is worth considering the uniqueness of the ANHC as an indigenous cultural site. The Hall of Cultures aspect of the ANHC is the most similar space to a traditional museum. The ANHC is a highly interactive site emphasizing heritage over history, relating to concepts of museums as cultural machinery. Tony Bennett, considering exhibition practice in relation to difference and culture, states that “museums are best understood as distinctive cultural machineries that, through the tensions that they generate within the self, have operated as a means for balancing the tensions of modernity.”⁴⁴ Machines can be understood in technological terms as things that make a task simpler, easier, or faster. In this case, the spread of culture, or its preservation and strengthening, can be done more effectively by an institution than individuals or groups. The ANHC is rooted in the place of Anchorage and specifically in its various buildings on its site, so it has the physicality of a machine with its activities rooted in a geographical location. Through its community and school-aged education programs and occasional large gatherings, the ANHC functions as a cultural machine. However, this could also be said of a museum which was not specifically focused on promoting indigenous cultures.

The point of distinction for the ANHC is its role in promoting Alaska Native cultures—which can be seen as a form of resistance to dominant Euro-American culture—through the decolonial possibilities of heritage work. Anthropologist Arthur Mason argues that “today, in Alaska, heritage work has become an integral part of creating a greater sense of Alaska Native self-awareness and identity.”⁴⁵ Mason is concerned specifically with Alutiiq heritage work, yet his statement demonstrates the importance of heritage work in Alaska. Scholar Moira Simpson argues that the history of Native American resistance to dominant American culture can be traced back to the Ghost Dance movement of the 19th century, a performative, artistic response to colonialism.⁴⁶ She writes, “One manifestation of this self-determination movement was the establishment of Native American museums and cultural centers.”⁴⁷ This concept of self-definition has also been considered in response to the National Museum of the American Indian. Amanda J. Cobb described the institution as “[an] instrument of self-definition and cultural continuance,” through its Native American curators and director.⁴⁸ The concept of an “instrument” of self-definition is especially important when considering the ANHC. Many of the museums Simpson discusses were founded to convey information *about* Native American peoples not by them.⁴⁹ Though the non-Native scholars and curators perhaps did research and collaborated with Native people, the distinction of *about* rather than *by* is significant. Self-determination and decolonization, though related, are not synonymous. According to

Amy Lonetree, a Native American scholar and outspoken critic of the NMAI, to be truly decolonial, a museum would have to acknowledge the true brutality of colonialism.⁵⁰ The ANHC does in part by referencing in its exhibitions the limited numbers of certain Alaska Native groups and speakers. The ANHC, like the NMAI, does not emphasize the trauma of colonialism, but instead allows a setting for Alaska Natives to present themselves. Like Bennett's notion of the machine, the ANHC is useful as an instrument of self-determination.

These concepts of the museum, tradition and heritage, foreground the cosmopolitanism of the ANHC, specifically *indigenous cosmopolitanism*. Many sources point to the seeming dichotomy between indigeneity as highly localized and spatially bounded, and cosmopolitanism, at its roots meaning citizen of the cosmos who is somehow simultaneously above the cosmos. Scholar Elizabeth Povinelli, who has written extensively on Indigenous issues, asks succinctly, "Are indigeneity and cosmopolitanism two different ways of being a citizen of the earth?"⁵¹ Povinelli does not conclude her article with an answer to this question but rather focuses on the concepts of ethics and obligations that are required in being a cosmopolitan or an indigenous person. Indigeneity, though necessitating local ties, is a global identification, exemplified by the 2007 United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted and related to Indigenous peoples worldwide.⁵² The renewed focus on indigeneity and cosmopolitanism simultaneously have spurred several articles on indigenous cosmopolitanism as well as the anthology *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century* (2010). In this anthology's introduction, anthropologist Maximilian Forte, writes, "The point is that the idea of 'indigenous cosmopolitans' is part of a growing understanding of vernacular cosmopolitanism, that is, real-life, actually lived, everyday practice rooted in specific cultural formations."⁵³ Forte cites many scholars who have emphasized the highly localized possibilities of cosmopolitanism and how it can be a useful framework for many circumstances of situated relationships and exchanges. In his own contribution to the anthology, Forte argues that tying cosmopolitanism to indigeneity deepens both concepts, allowing for possibilities of understanding the connectedness of the world and of articulating indigeneity.⁵⁴ For the ANHC, this means not only being a host to the world, but allowing young people and elders to communicate their culture to visitors. Cultural guides at the ANHC are mostly Alaska Native young people. As part of their training, they must learn about cultures outside their own, deepening their conceptions of Alaska Native cultures. Visitors engage in many ways with the ANHC but mostly through these guides, modern young people who live in Anchorage and are trained to present traditional knowledge.

Most articles on indigenous cosmopolitanism use a people, site, or artistic form or style to demonstrate indigenous cosmopolitanism in action, like my positioning of the ANHC as a site of indigenous cosmopolitanism. Mark Goodale, detailing indigenous rap youth culture in Bolivia, defines indigenous cosmopolitanism as "a way of reclaiming modernity as a cultural category and what it means to be modern in Bolivia."⁵⁵ Goodale uses the term modern as a counter to the position of indigenous peoples outside of modernity and situating them as modern through the use of rap. His choice of the concept of cosmopolitanism as a starting point is based its connotation of belonging in the world.⁵⁶ This sense of belonging is indigenous because it combines "an emergent indigeneity with other, more global forms of inclusion."⁵⁷ To Goodale, indigenous cosmopolitanism is based in the projection of worlds which can be transnational, regional, or even local and still be cosmopolitan.⁵⁸ Anchorage, Alaska, and by extension the Alaska Native Heritage Center, can be conceptualized as cosmopolitan in its regional location as well as through tourism, which is mostly intranational though international visitors frequent the site as well.⁵⁹

Visitors must go to the ANHC to experience a sense of belonging in indigenous culture, but they return to their homes with this new knowledge.

The centrality of the ANHC in culture is paralleled by the Alaska Federation of Natives' importance in the economic and political realm. The Alaska Federation of Natives has membership spanning across Alaska Native cultures and can be seen as both political and cultural, supporting economic and land rights for Alaska Natives while simultaneously emphasizing its support of institutions and groups that promote Alaska Native cultures.⁶⁰ Its headquarters are in Anchorage, the major city, rather than Juneau, the state capital.⁶¹ Although the Alaska Federation of Natives is political in its aims, the Alaska Native Heritage Center is tasked with presenting Alaska Native culture. The ANHC's cosmopolitanism functions much in the way Ian Mclean describes the term in relation to Australian Aboriginal flag, albeit physically spatialized. Mclean describes the Aboriginal flag, a symbol of Aboriginality across Australia, as "much more like a cosmopolitan space, a series of localities organized in a network of relations, than a nation. If they have a sense of unity it is not political but cosmological."⁶² As a symbol, the flag highlights a different sense of indigenous cosmopolitanism, a sense of belonging in relation to similar peoples, while acknowledging the distinctions between and among them. Similarly, ANHC acts as a unifying pan-Alaska Native identity situated in Anchorage. The term Alaska Native, used to describe several mostly unrelated indigenous peoples in Alaska, and Alaska Native identity's prominence in an institution like the ANHC suggests that Alaska Native peoples are connected mainly through shared history, based on colonial groupings that have then become means of self-identification, presented to the world.

So how does one ethically teach outsiders about Alaska Native cultures? The ANHC provides a potential answer in its "Ten Universal Alaska Native Values," placed below its mission on its website.⁶³ The values, taken from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, emphasize sharing, patience, connections, and respect for elders.⁶⁴ These values like the ANHC's mission underlie and guide its programs and exhibitions. The anthropologist Susan W. Fair suggests similar but simplified values when she writes, "Attachment to place, sharing, and respect for others are perhaps the most honored of Native values."⁶⁵ The repetition of these similar values in statewide publications and organizations suggests their universality in the context of Alaska. By ascribing to these values through cultural activities at the ANHC, Alaska Natives in Anchorage and beyond can have a sense of belonging to a broader Alaska Native culture. The ANHC, a specific place of the enactment of these values through tradition and heritage, can thus be seen as a site of indigenous cosmopolitanism. But the values as described above are not particularly contrary to many other cultures, and they may, in fact, seem quite universal. They are, however, claimed as Alaska Native, placing them into the space of belonging to a group of diverse Native people in the geographic location of Alaska. People of other cultures can be incorporated into this belonging by visiting and submersing themselves into the ANHC experience, taking away new cultural knowledge that is always identified and understood as being Alaska Native, specifically and generally belonging to the Alaska Native cultures.

The Tourist Experience, Cosmopolitan Curiosity, and Nostalgia

My initial experience with the Alaska Native Heritage Center was as a tourist, visiting the site for a day during the summer. I have since been back multiple times on subsequent trips to Alaska. As there is snow and frigid temperatures in Alaska most of the year, the seasonal opening of ANHC allows visitors to fully experience the Village Sites. Separated by region and culture, each Village Site is distinct from non-Indigenous Alaskan or American culture as well as from other Alaska Native cultures. The experience is

immersive with a high level of interaction with the cultural guides. Without knowing the Alaska Native founding and authorship of the site, I was initially skeptical, as its advertisements feature mostly much older Alaska Native people in traditional clothing. It takes some digging on the website to understand its founding. The concept of Alaska Natives as guides of their culture could call to mind 19th-century world's fairs and problematic instances of non-European peoples performing culture for white audiences. This is not the case with the ANHC. Knowledge is shared at the site through personal interaction; by watching performances and having conversations with cultural hosts, high school- and college-age men and women employed by the ANHC.

The visitor's guide serves as primary document for my discussion of the ANHC experience (Figures 4–6). The indoor Gathering Place is the center of the site, directly across from the main entrance with a large window to view the Village Sites. The visitor's guide includes a daily schedule for the Gathering Place which cycles through a few different types of performances throughout the day (Figure 5). The four major activities held are "Introduction to Alaska Native Culture," "Alaska Native Games," "Alaska Native Storytelling," and "Alaska Native Dance Performance." Upon entering the ANHC, one is drawn to the Gathering Place as there is typically a small audience and some type of performance occurring during opening hours. On my first visit, there was an "Introduction to Alaska Native Cultures" presentation followed by an "Alaska Native Dance Performance" (Figure 7). The introduction serves as an overview of Alaska Native cultures—supported by the map behind the stage, color coded to represent each culture—and to the major logic of the site, the cultural richness of Alaska Native cultures, with great diversity yet much commonality. The diversity is geographic, language, and lifestyle-based. The commonality is the shared values detailed above as well as the experience of being Alaska Native. The performances are mostly by the ANHC cultural guides, high school and college students from Anchorage and all over Alaska who eloquently explain traditions, dances, or stories with the skill of experienced docents. They also wear traditional outfits belonging to their Alaska Native cultures.



Figure 4

Front cover and back cover of Alaska Native Heritage Center Visitors' Guide. 2014. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.



Figure 5

Interior of Alaska Native Heritage Center Visitors' Guide. 2014. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.

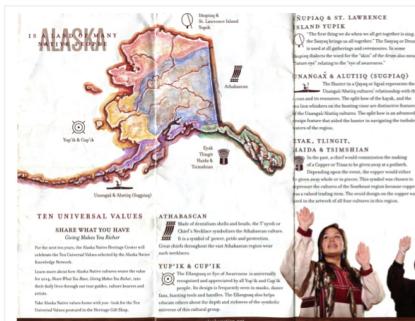


Figure 6

Interior of Alaska Native Heritage Center Visitors' Guide. 2014. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.



Figure 7

Photograph of Alaska Native Dance Demonstration, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska. 2014. Photograph by Marina Tyquiengco.

I highlight the presentation of the cultural guides as a pathway to discussing modernist nostalgia. The website includes pictures of various employees and cultural guides in traditional clothing, which could serve as a draw for tourists seeking an authentic experience with “real” Alaska Natives. The cultural guides may wear traditional Alaska Native clothing and many speak Alaska Native languages, but interactions with them are much like what one would expect from any museum guide. They are well-spoken and quite knowledgeable. Natasha Eaton’s modernist or imperialist nostalgia is described as a kind of homelessness which makes Others of everyone who is non-Western.⁶⁶ Eaton’s version of cosmopolitanism is tied to India and the enactment of nostalgia for India in England.⁶⁷ To Eaton, the exotic becomes cosmopolitan through, “travel and translation.”⁶⁸ The majority of visitors to the center, especially in the summertime, come via cruise ships.⁶⁹ The Director of Marketing for the ANHC has stated that, “The cruise industry has been involved with the Alaska Native Heritage Center since inception.”⁷⁰ To conceptualize cruise visitors as agents of this kind of modernist nostalgia is a somewhat literal reading of Eaton. However, the costuming of most employees at the site seems to support this sense that one is receiving or participating in an authentic experience. Visitors expecting guides to perform their culture will not be disappointed, but they will also realize how much the guides are like other millennials, steering the conversation to topics they are especially familiar with and checking their cell phones between visitor groups.

Cruise guests travel as part of their vacation both on cruise ships and to various locations while in port. The size of the ANHC grounds can support the visit of many cruise ship tourists.⁷¹ At the ANHC, they can get an immersive experience, in part through the performances which continue each day the center is open. When visiting the ANHC, a cruise guest would come in and immediately be drawn to the Gathering Place, attracted first to the center and then to the performance of culture. Alaska Native peoples to a non-Native American tourist could seem exceptionally exotic and easy to understand through the exhibitions and tours. For many visitors, the draw of the ANHC is likely modernist nostalgia, a cosmopolitan longing for initially unknown “timeless yet fragile primitive cultures.”⁷² Yet, the ANHC combats this notion by having visitors interact with Alaska Native peoples at the center, where they exist firmly in the contemporary.



Figure 8
Photograph of Alaska Native Games Demonstration. 2014. Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska. Photograph by Marina Tyquiengco.

The “Alaska Native Games” and “Alaska Native Dance Performance” coincide with Kwame Anthony Appiah’s definition of cosmopolitan curiosity. To Appiah, cosmopolitan curiosity is about shared experiences among people, interests, or activities that are not necessarily

universal but are shared, experienced, or carried out by different people.⁷³ Dances and physical games could serve as two entry points in Appiah's conception of curiosity. They offer a way for people who are not Alaska Natives to connect with these cultures. This notion of cosmopolitan curiosity is taken from Appiah's chapter on "Imaginary Strangers," and it is worth noting that Alaska Natives such as the cultural guides cease to be imaginary strangers to non-indigenous tourists and visitors. According to Appiah, after this cosmopolitan curiosity is enacted, "We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting."⁷⁴ Many performed Alaska Native games are more akin to completing difficult physical tasks than to typical sports or games; the main competition is against one's own abilities rather than an opposing team. My photograph demonstrates one such game, the high kick, where athletes try to spring up from a ground position to kick the ball that dangles from above (Figure 8). It sounds relatively simple, but in the demonstration I watched, an athletic young man could not quite kick the ball. This moment showed the audience that the cultural guides are learning just as visitors learn, but by doing instead of listening. This moment did not detract from the guide's expertise but rather enforced his humanity—a perhaps unintended, important result of this exchange. The ANHC serves to pique visitors' interest in Alaska Native cultures by presenting a breadth of cultures and acknowledging that each presentation does not cover every aspect of a culture.

The main outdoor component of the ANHC, the Village Sites, is perhaps the center's most interactive component. The Southeast region of Alaska is represented by a traditional long wooden house called a *Naa Hit* in Tlingit. This is one of the largest structures and typically the first on the self-guided tour. Although there is no written record of it, each dwelling is the work of specific Alaska Native groups, initiated and created as a collaborative project of artists and communities. When I visited, the Tlingit house cultural guide, who was of Tlingit descent, explained that each log in the house was set with a series of cuts made by hand with a very specific knife that took hours to complete on one log.⁷⁵ The dwelling is quite sizable and thus was the result of a considerable number of hours of work. The interior has large carved poles that support the heavy wooden roof. The Tlingit pole is in the typical formline design style, with bear and raven iconography (Figure 9). The guided tour option seemed to provide more general histories while the self-guided tour allowed more time to talk to cultural guides and move at one's own pace. The Tlingit cultural guide shared an interesting anecdote about her dance cloak. It had four rows of buttons, instead of the typical three rows, as she was related to Tlingit royalty and therefore allowed this distinction. After this visit, I saw many more Tlingit dance cloaks as part of museum displays, and without exception, each had two or three rows of buttons. This dwelling and my conversation with the guide provided me with very specific information that I recalled easily nearly a year later. She shared her sense of belonging to the Tlingit people, particularly through her practice of dance. She showed me an image of her dance cloak on her iPhone. This interaction could be a micro-example of the enacting of indigenous cosmopolitanism, expressing indigeneity through a contemporary medium, accessible in a form visitors would be accustomed to, yet showing traditional culture. Her knowledge interested me and left me with tidbits of information that stuck, but they could have just as easily triggered simple appreciation. Again, as Appiah suggests, cosmopolitan curiosity can lead to learning.⁷⁶ By working at the site, she was enacting her own kind of indigenous cosmopolitanism, using the job to teach outsiders about important aspects of her culture as well as to learn about and engage with other Alaska Native cultures.



Figure 9
Interior of Main Dwelling of
Eyak, Tlingit, Haida,
Tsimshian Village Site,
Alaska Native Heritage
Center, Anchorage, AK.
2014. Photograph by Marina
Tyquiengco.



Figure 10. Eyak, Tlingit, Haida,
Tsimshian Village Site Village Site,
Screenshot of Alaska Travel Video,
The Alaska Native Heritage Center
Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011



Figure 11. Unangax and Alutiiq Village
Site, Alaska Native Heritage Center,
Anchorage, Alaska. The Alaska Native
Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage,
Alaska. © 2011.



Figure 12. Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik Village Site, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.



Figure 13. Athabascan Village Site, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska. Photograph by Michael Dinneen. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011.

The five other dwellings are all typically overseen by cultural guides (Figures 10–13, Yup'ik and Cup'ik Village Site not pictured). On my initial visit, the Alutiiq (Sugpiaq) dwelling was closed for renovations, but the similar Unangax dwelling was open. The map on the visitor's guide provides an artistic rendering of the site. Outside of each of them, there are small information panels which explain the traditional names and building methods for each dwelling. The cultural guides are thus not the only sources of information on the Village Sites; these panels and a selection of objects inside also provide information, as in a museum. The cultural guides are typically assigned to dwellings of cultures to which they belong and thus can provide information about more than just the dwelling itself. In my recent visit in June 2018, this was not the case with the Athabascan house. The cultural guide was Inupiaq but very informed about the site, responding enthusiastically when I asked his favorite aspect of the site. He then detailed the ingenuity of Athabascans fashioning rockers out of hanging baby boards. Through the cultural guides, the ANHC is site of living cultures in a way that museums with only static displays cannot really be.²⁷

Although there are typical text panels, the cultural guides are the major sources of information about each dwelling. The information one gets about each site is dependent on the personal interaction with the cultural guides. The guides are well trained and

talking to them can be highly informative, but these encounters are highly variable, dependent largely on the questions one asks or how talkative the cultural guide is.



Figure 14

Poster for Summer of Native Art, 2014, Ossie Kairaiuak Artist Residency, 2014. Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska. The Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum, Anchorage, Alaska. © 2011

As the cover of the visitor's guide from summer attests, the 2014 season was the "Summer of Alaska Native Art" (Figure 14). For most of the summer, there were resident artists creating artwork daily in outdoor demonstrations. On my first visit, the artist Ossie Kairaiuak was carving outside of the Qasig or traditional dwelling of the Cup'ik and Yup'ik cultures. Kairaiuak is identified as a Yup'ik artist, and he was in the process of carving when I visited. While carving, he made small talk with visitors, asking them where they were from, before answering questions about his art. He had a tent with several examples of his work. He was carving an ivory mask of a wolf and when asked about his process, he shared that he lets the material dictate what he creates. Rather than giving any specific cultural lesson, while working in traditional materials, he answered perhaps exactly as one would imagine his role as an artist would dictate. The press release on his residency emphasizes his cultural work in terms of song and dance, which he did not talk about specifically. Instead, the tent was like a typical artist studio and visitors to the ANHC were his studio guests. He talked about his art but not himself.

The "Summer of Alaska Native Art" highlights the emphasis on art from ANHC's mission statement. Art is another example of a shared experience, often cited as a potential source of indigenous cosmopolitanism.⁷⁸ The artist demonstration and residency program offers interaction with a contemporary artist, which dispels any notion of mythic indigenous artists. Visitors are exposed to another way of interacting in the world, specifically as an Alaska Native contemporary artist. The ANHC focuses specifically on artists who work in traditional mediums, enacting their local or specific Alaska Native cultures. By bringing these artists to the site, however, with its sense of wider belonging, their cosmopolitanism is being enacted simultaneous with their indigeneity.



Figure 15
View of Hall of Cultures Exhibition,
Alaska Native Heritage Center,
Anchorage, Alaska. 2014. Photograph
by Marina Tyquiengco

The section of the ANHC that is perhaps most like a typical museum is the Hall of Cultures which is comprised of installations on the major cultures of Alaska (Figure 15). Unlike the Gathering Place or the Village Sites, there are no cultural guides for this section. There are images of contemporary Alaska Native peoples as well as historical photographs to detail microhistories about each culture. Like a traditional museum, there are objects on display in cases that relate to specific cultures and they are described in relation to their use and meaning for the culture. These objects are all newly made versions of traditional pieces.⁷⁹ The choice to use primarily contemporary objects is significant as a demonstration of living cultures. Much like the center overall, the Hall of Cultures acts quite opposite of museums by non-Native peoples, made without thought to who created these objects.⁸⁰ Traditional objects are still valued, but by using only newly made versions, the center can credit makers. This sense of authorship of objects, displaying them with the names of their creators, is unthinkable for artifacts collected much earlier, when the names of these indigenous artists typically went unrecorded.⁸¹ After watching performances and walking through the Village Sites, the Hall of Cultures is rather static. Perhaps this is a pitfall of a site that fits so well with the conception of a living culture; its sections seem uninteresting in comparison to the type of unique personal interactions that define most of the experiences of the ANHC.

Concluding Comments

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is a unique site of indigenous cosmopolitanism. Through its cultural guides, it provides visitors with a glimpse into to Alaska Native cultures. It celebrates the positive and mostly apolitical aspects of Alaska Native cultures such as clothing, food, dance, games, and languages. There are still Alaska Natives in poverty, and there is a history of displacement of Alaska Natives like the histories of Native Americans more broadly.⁸² The wealth of each community is largely dependent on its natural resources, so the equal representation of cultures at the ANHC does not necessarily represent groups' relative power in the state. The Alaska Federation of Natives and its history suggest that Alaska Native peoples are politically powerful and influential. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 created regional and village corporations, some of which are extremely prosperous and provide well for their shareholders, while others still have not realized profits.⁸³ These native corporations function to profit off the land and resources of specific regions, traditional lands of distinctive Alaska Native peoples, which then benefit those peoples. Some of these regional corporations have provided support to the ANHC. From visiting the site, there seems to be equal attention given to all the major cultures, and it is not so apparent which

groups (as corporations are regional) are particularly better off. Very little of the colonial past and history can be gleaned from visiting the ANHC.

The lack of attention to colonial history and past was one major criticism of the National Museum of the American Indian.⁸⁴ C. Grieg Crysler suggested that the NMAI displays are, “jarringly detached from the larger political and economic realities of the native communities they represent.”⁸⁵ Similar criticism could be leveled against the ANHC, but it does not aim to be a museum of a people or even a history museum, but rather a heritage center. The emphasis is thus on heritage, culture, and tradition rather than history. The limited context can be viewed as a conscious choice to celebrate culture rather than victimize Alaska Native peoples. A focus on contemporary circumstance might give the visitor a different, perhaps less idyllic version of Alaska Native peoples. But the somewhat benign foci of the ANHC—the dance, language, music, and games that provide the most entertainment to the visitor—also allow the Alaska Native elders who oversaw the initial site to determine how they wanted to be seen, in a positive light through traditions. The longing initially evoked of some mythic past of Alaska Native people, a cosmopolitan nostalgia, is challenged by the ANHC as a site of living culture. Interaction with the cultural guides reinforces that Alaska Natives are a contemporary people, as teenagers with smartphones can show visitors their traditional dance costumes. This evocation of tradition as a contemporary practice is perhaps the most striking aspect of ANHC’s cosmopolitanism.

I came to appreciate from subsequent conversations with Alaska Native peoples in Anchorage, Athabascan land, that the lack of claiming of the ANHC on Athabascan land is striking. This is particularly true for the performances, which often demonstrate Inuit traditions instead of local Athabascan practices. Despite its limitations, the ANHC is a rare example of a Native heritage site authored by Native peoples. Attention to this site can open possibilities to being in the world as a cosmopolitan and an indigenous person, and to relate these ethical ways of being.

Notes

1. Margaret Nelson, foreword to *Qayaqs & Canoes: Native Ways of Knowing*, comp. Jan Steinbright (Anchorage: Alaska Native Heritage Center, 2001), vii. 
2. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “About Alaska Native Heritage Center,” accessed on October 2, 2018, <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/para-nav/home/>. 
3. Libby Roderick, ed. *Alaska Native Cultures and Issues: Responses to frequently asked questions* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2010), 3. 
4. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “The Center’s History,” accessed on October 2, 2018, <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main-nav/about-us/centers-history/>. 
5. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “The Center’s History.” 
6. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “The Center’s History.” 
7. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “The Center’s History.” 
8. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “Board of Directors and Staff,” accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/para-nav/contact-us/board-of-directors/>. 
9. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “Board of Directors and Staff.” 
10. Anchorage.net, “Anchorage Facts and Figures,” accessed on October 2, 2018, <http://www.anchorage.net/media/anchorage-facts>. 
11. Anchorage.net, “Anchorage Facts and Figures,” accessed on October 2, 2018, <http://www.anchorage.net/media/anchorage-facts>. 
12. Alaska Native Heritage Center, “The Center’s History.” 
13. As I will detail below, a few articles on Alaska Native culture, heritage, and tourism have mentioned the ANHC either in passing or as a counter to the main subject of

the passage. 

14. C. Grieg Crysler, "Comparative Alterities: Native Encounters and the National Museum," in *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories: Imperial Legacies, Architecture, and Modernity*, ed. Madhuri Desai and Mrinalini Rajagopalan (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 105–136. 
15. Jacki Thompson Rand, "Museums and Indigenous Perspectives on Curatorial Practice," in *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2009), 129–131. 
16. See Amy Lonetree, "Missed Opportunities: Reflections on the NMAI," *American Indian Quarterly* 30. no. 3/4 (2006): 632–645. 
17. Julie Decker, "1975–1995 and the Post-Pipeline Boom in Alaskan Art: Some History and Personal Overview," in *Icebreakers: Alaska's Most Innovative Artists*. ed. Julie Decker (Seoul: Decker Art Services, 1999), 21. 
18. Decker, "1975–1995 and the Post-Pipeline Boom," 21. 
19. Decker, "1975–1995 and the Post-Pipeline Boom," 21. 
20. Anchorage.net, "Anchorage Facts and Figures." 
21. Robin Maria Delugan, "Indigeneity across Borders: Hemispheric Migrations and Cosmopolitan Encounters," *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 1 (2010): 88–90. 
22. Douglas E. Evelyn, "The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian: An International Institution of Living Cultures," *The Public Historian* 28, no.2 (2006): 55. 
23. Natasha Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London, 1750–1793," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (2006): 228. 
24. I primarily reference Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006). 
25. "After all, hospitality is inherently indigenous." Alexis Celeste Bunten, "More like Ourselves: Indigenous Capitalism through Tourism," *American Indian Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2010): 306. 
26. Bunten, "More like Ourselves," 290. 
27. Bunten, "More like Ourselves," 290. 
28. Bunten, "More like Ourselves," 287–288. 
29. James Clifford, "Looking Several Ways: Anthropology and Native Heritage in Alaska," *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 1 (2004): 5–30.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/379634>. 
30. Clifford, "Looking Several Ways," 8. 
31. Clifford, "Looking Several Ways," 15. 
32. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York City: Columbia University Press, {1983} 2002). 
33. Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi, "Celebrating Heritage Traditions in Alaska's Indigenous Communities," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 37 (2013): 4–5. 
34. Michael F. Brown, "The Possibilities and Perils of Heritage Management," in *Cultural Heritage Ethics*, ed. Constantine Sandis (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014), 171. 
35. Nelson, "Forward," vii. 
36. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "ANHC Mission and Vision," accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main-nav/about-us/anhc-mission-new/> 
37. Jackinsky-Sethi, "Celebrating heritage traditions," 4–5. 

38. Susan W. Fair, "Traditional and Contemporary Native Art: Inventions, Opinions, Mysterious Disappearances," in *Icebreakers: Alaska's Most Innovative Artists*, ed. Julie Decker (Seoul: Decker Art Services, 1999), 104. 
39. Ian McLean, "Double Desire: Becoming Aboriginal," *Broadsheet* 42, no. 4 (2014): 71. 
40. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "ANHC Mission and Vision." 
41. Roderick, *Alaska Native Cultures*, 6. 
42. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "Language Project," accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main-nav/education-and-programs/language-project/>. 
43. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "Language Project." 
44. Tony Bennett, "Exhibition, Difference and the Logic of Culture," in *Museums Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaia, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 46-69. 
45. Arthur Mason, "Whither the Historicities of Alutiiq Heritage Work Are Drifting," *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Maximilian Forte, (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 78. 
46. Moira G Simpson, "Native American Museums and Cultural Centres," in *Making Representation: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 135. 
47. Simpson, "Native American Museums," 135. 
48. Amanda Cobb, "The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty Review," *American Quarterly* 57, no.2 (2005): 486. 
49. Simpson, "Native American Museums," 143-169. 
50. Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2012), 164. 
51. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Citizens of the Earth: Indigenous Cosmopolitanism and the Governance of the Prior," in *Varieties of Sovereignty and Citizenship*, ed. Sigal R. Ben-Porath and Rogers M. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 213. 
52. "United Nations, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007," accessed on February 14, 2015, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. 
53. Maximilian Forte, ed., *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 6. 
54. Forte, *Indigenous Cosmopolitans*, 22-24. 
55. Mark Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity: Indigenous Cosmopolitanism and the Coming of a Second Revolution in Bolivia," *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 4 (2006): 649. 
56. Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 634. 
57. Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 634. 
58. Goodale, "Reclaiming Modernity," 641. 
59. Anchorage, "Anchorage Facts and Figures." 
60. Alaska Federation of Natives, "About AFN," accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.nativefederation.org/about-afn/>. 
61. Alaska Federation of Natives, "About AFN." 

62. McLean, "Double Desire," 71. [D](#)
63. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "ANHC Mission and Vision." [D](#)
64. Alaska Native Heritage Center, "ANHC Mission and Vision." [D](#)
65. Fair, "Traditional and Contemporary Native Art," 104. [D](#)
66. Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic," 228. [D](#)
67. Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic," 227. [D](#)
68. Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic," 230. [D](#)
69. Cruise Line Industry of Alaska, "Stanley: Support from Cruise Tourism Helped Make Alaska Native Heritage Center a Reality," February 4, 2015,
<http://www.cliaalaska.org/2015/02/stanley-support-from-cruise-tourism-helped-make-alaska-native-heritage-center-a-reality/>. [D](#)
70. Cruise Line Industry of Alaska, "Stanley." [D](#)
71. Cruise Line Industry of Alaska, "Stanley." [D](#)
72. Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic," 228. [D](#)
73. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, 97. [D](#)
74. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, 97. [D](#)
75. I follow Alexis Celeste Bunten's approach in identifying but not naming guides specifically, see Alexis Celeste Bunten, "More like Ourselves," 285–311. [D](#)
76. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, 97. [D](#)
77. Evelyn, "The Smithsonian's National Museum," 56. [D](#)
78. One great example of this is Carolyn Butler-Palmer, "David Neel's The Young Chief—Waxwaxam: A Cosmopolitan Treatise," in *Indigenous Cosmopolitans*, 63–76. [D](#)
79. Clifford, "Looking Several Ways," 15. [D](#)
80. Simpson, "Native American Museums," 148. [D](#)
81. Cobb, "The National Museum," 492. [D](#)
82. Roderick, *Alaska Native Cultures*, 4. [D](#)
83. Roderick, *Alaska Native Cultures*, 4. [D](#)
84. Crysler, "Comparative Alterities," 123. [D](#)
85. Crysler, "Comparative Alterities," 123. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Marina Tyquiengco

Marina Tyquiengco is a scholar of contemporary Indigenous art and a PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. Her dissertation will focus on Indigenous artists' use of their bodies from the 1990s to today in Australia, Canada and the US. She was Editor-in-Chief for "Volume 7: Presenting Race, Institutional Contexts and Critiques" of *Contemporaneity*, the University of Pittsburgh History of Art and Architecture graduate journal. She has written exhibit reviews for *Art Inquiries*, *Contemporaneity*, and *First American Art Magazine*. She has presented her research at the Feminist Art History Conference, the Australian and New Zealand Studies of North America Conference, and the Southeastern College Art Conference.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lily Wei, "Art as Protest: Cooking as Resistance: Everyday Life in Taipei's Housing Rights Movement," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.6>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Art as Protest, Cooking as Resistance: Everyday Life in Taipei's Housing Rights Movement

Lily Wei

ABSTRACT From 2010 to 2013, during the height of Taiwan's housing rights movement, Participatory Art became instrumental in defending the right to the city. In this housing rights movement, artists, students, residents, and other professionals united to challenge neoliberal urban development. Two protest art projects in Taipei, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line*, illustrate the interdisciplinary, trans-social strata collaboration. The artworks responded to encroachment on land and estate by the Taipei City government and real estate developers. The art forms employed included performance art, dance, writing, sculpture, graffiti, graphic design, and photography. Through everyday acts, such as cooking and driving, the two works lent voice and visibility to marginalized residents. The language and imagery of these protest gestures produced a theatricality that was at once jovial, amiable, critical, and contentious. The coexisting confrontational and convivial tones also encapsulate Taipei's housing rights movement, in which the Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal exercised a central role. This article integrates findings from archival analysis, interviews, participation observation, and site visits. The content considers the relationship among Participatory Art, social activism, urban planning, and neoliberalism. The author also draws connections between the visual and cultural aspects of the featured Participatory Art. The text concludes that *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* offer a broader and richer interpretation of Participatory Art. They demonstrate diverse adaptations and multiple approaches to facilitating socially-minded, collaborative art. They also confirm Participatory Art's ability to agitate problematic dynamics in the (re)construction of global cities.

The city is the site where people of all sorts and classes mingle, however reluctantly and agonistically, to produce a common if perpetually changing and transitory life And in the long history of urban utopianism, we have a record of all manner of human aspirations to make the city in a different image The recent revival of emphasis upon the supposed loss of urban commonalities reflects the seemingly profound impacts of the recent wave of privatizations, enclosures, spatial controls, policing, and surveillance upon the qualities of urban life in general, and in particular upon the potentiality to build or inhibit new forms of social relations (a new commons) within an urban process influenced if not dominated by capitalist class interests.

— David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*.¹

In recent years, there has been a surge of housing rights related protests around the globe. In these struggles, residents fought against forced demolition of their homes. The fierce and at times violent protests in Korea's Longshan, Hong Kong's Tsaiyuan Village (菜園村), and China's Chong Qing City offer a few examples. These discontents signal a defect in local, regional, and global methods of urban governance, which demand reconsideration and reconstitution. To safeguard individuals' right to the city, especially the right of marginalized populations, an inclusive approach to urban government becomes vital. Aside from the introduction of Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban

Renewal, this paper highlights two of the numerous protest artworks in Taipei's housing rights movement: *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line*.

An analysis of their nature and dynamics helps investigate the relationship between protest art and the neoliberal city. Both works combined multiple art forms for activism. *Operation Little Barbarossa* was a temporary, guerrilla-style urban "infiltration." Initiated by the art collective \j\ACT (Little Act), this protest artwork utilized sculpture, participatory performance, and textual information. *Cooking at the Front Line*, a student-run kitchen, was a long-term protest action. This initiative employed cooking, graffiti, graphic design, and photography. Although *Operation* and *Cooking* applied different approaches to art as protest, both emphasized public participation. Furthermore, both point to the importance of Participatory Art in Taiwan's grassroots movements.

Neoliberal City

In the global, capitalist economy, cities are managed as businesses through neoliberal policies. According to Peck and Tickell, neoliberalism embodies a type of free-market economic theory. Operating on the "logics of competitiveness," this model prioritizes market expansion and opposes all collectivist strategies.² Trouillot further asserts that neoliberalism champions "market extremism," as it bears the notion that the market is "not only the best, but the only reliable social regulator."³ In Trouillot's opinion, this idea can be used as an argument against liberal democracy. At the same time, Peck and Tickell delineate that the neoliberal theory has become "the dominant ideological rationalization for globalization and contemporary state 'reform'."⁴ Regarding neoliberalism's effects on government and on social welfare, Bourdieu maintains that this framework erodes state organizations. This erosion, according to Bourdieu, occurs through the building up of "agents of finance, budget, militarism, and the rule of law."⁵ In Bourdieu's view, these institutions possess the potential to safeguard the interests of the dominated and those under cultural and economic disadvantage. However, there is potential in reversing this breakdown of protective mechanisms for the underprivileged. Kingfisher and Maskovsky suggest that one should treat neoliberalism "as a process rather than a fait accompli."⁶ If neoliberalism is a process, then *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* attempted to subvert Taipei's neoliberal trend through civic participation.

Taipei's current political, economic, and cultural debates on urban renewal can be understood within the context of neoliberal policies. Manufactured in Chicago and marketed in Washington DC, New York, and London, neoliberalism was imported to Taiwan after the 1990s.⁷ Lee Zong-Rong, an assistant research fellow at the Institute of Sociology at Academia Sinica, explains that prior to the 1990s, Taiwan's economic development was supported by small and medium enterprises (SMEs); however, after the 1990's, Taiwan experienced political emancipation and economic liberalization.⁸ Thus began the privatization of formerly public sectors, such as telecommunications, oil, finance institutions, and financial-holding companies. Corporations that controlled these private sectors proceeded to establish close working relationships with powerful politico-economic entities. Consequently, financial enterprises began to influence government decisions through these established connections. In turn, the US-trained, neoliberal government officials encouraged the simultaneous liberalization of Taiwan's economy and politics. Family-owned companies such as Taiwan High Speed Rail, Far East Tone, and Taiwan Mobile received privileges, thriving and expanding on exclusive opportunities.⁹ Lee notes that 80% of major corporations in Taiwan are now controlled by Taiwan's network of elite families, and these corporations continue to expand unchecked due to these "abnormal" political-financial relations.¹⁰ Lee explained the politico-economic elite's incentive to push and implement neoliberalism in Taiwan. His two-year

investigation into Taiwan's politico-entrepreneurial intermarriages indicates the intertwining of the nation's political and economic interests. The findings reveal that Taiwan's upper class is in fact "one big family."¹¹ The grip and strength of this political-entrepreneurial unit are blatant in Taipei's urban development.

Following the economic recession of 2009, Taiwan's socioeconomic disparities have become more prominent than ever. According to statistics from the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, the annual income of Taiwan's top 20 percent of richest families is 8.22 times higher than that of the island's lowest-income families. Lee warns that unless the government "introduces relevant taxes on wealth . . . and social welfare measures," the "one Taiwan, two societies" phenomenon would worsen.¹²

Regarding government regulation on property value inflation margin, Lee maintains that government regulation is essential because of the fundamental concept that land is public property. In other words, "all citizens have the right to dwell [on it]." He reports that the market is usually regulated by the government in Northern and Central European countries, and unlimited increase in housing prices rarely exists in these nations. In contrast, "there is no limit in real-estate market inflation in Taiwan."¹³ Lee states that in Taiwan, financial corporations trade and speculate land to make exorbitant profits. Moreover, the government, believing that economic growth improves life quality, encourages and assists in property speculation. As a result, the unregulated major enterprises are allowed to expand ad infinitum. "The Grand Families of Taiwan" made a valid claim in stating that "there's nothing wrong with members of these extended families supporting each other" and strategizing to advance family interests. However, the authors accurately concluded that it is necessary to consider "how these family conglomerates can be prevented from standing on the opposite side of the greater public good as they thrive and prosper in pursuit of lasting business success."¹⁴

The two protest artworks featured in this article can be interpreted as a reaction to the unchecked corporate-governmental collaboration in land speculation and the consequent infringement of citizens' rights to housing and public space. Through *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line*, the artists and the participants exerted their right to the city. Via participatory art, among other art forms, they rendered themselves visible in the urban landscape and championed the housing rights of the professional and working class. If their actions did not defeat the waves of "privatizations, enclosures, and spatial controls" evident in the neoliberal city, as described by Harvey, they did demonstrate a new form of social relation, a "new commons" through protest art. As illustrated in later sections, their approach to the fight against "capitalist class interests" in urban renewal was at once creative, convivial, and combative.¹⁵

The birth of Taiwan's housing rights movement occurred around the same time as the country's neoliberalization. In 1989, close to five hundred thousand people marched to the streets due to the unreasonable spike of housing prices. On August 26, 1989, the protesters, organized by the Homeless People Alliance, spent the night on the avenue of Section 4, Zhongxiao E. Road in Taipei. One month later, the protesters camped for three days at the Cathay Insurance Headquarters on Renai Road. A wedding ceremony for a hundred homeless couples were held at Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall. The fight for affordable housing would continue in Taiwan until the present day.¹⁶

Beginning in 2007, Taipei's neoliberal urban (re)development reached a new height. Real estate developers and the Taipei City government collaborated to create a "New Taipei." Without the general population's knowledge, various "urban development programs" went underway. These renewal schemes came in the name of "International Cultural Event," "Tourism Development," and the more recent "Four Golden Blocks Plan" and "Taipei Wall Street." The rhetoric of these building plans, according to the Taipei City

government, was to put Taiwan's capital city on the global map. However, critics maintained that this attempt to transform Taipei's urban landscape was, in reality, an effort to procure more land and capital by the political-economic elite. This view would be supported by a survey of urban development programs in Taipei from 2004 to 2014. During this period of "urban progress," numerous communities across Taipei City and its peripheral districts became affected. Most of the residents in these communities came from the professional-working class. For instance, in 2009, a portion of the Lo-Sheng Sanatorium, a home for patients with Hansen's Disease (or leprosy), was demolished despite vigorous protests and continuous negotiations by residents and their supporters.¹⁷ In central Taipei, low-income dwellers in two communities, Huaguan and Shaoxin, received court notices. In these letters, the Taiwan Ministry of Justice sued occupants living in units labeled "illegal" by officials. However, the sued parties had acquired their homes through either inheritance or legal purchase. The court notices mandated that each family self-demolish their homes. Many were ordered to pay compensation ranging from 40,000,000 to 70,000,000 NT (1,250,000 to 2,187,500 USD). The monetary compensation ordered by the court was an astronomical amount to the residents. The deadline to demolish their own homes added crushing pressure on the occupants. In other residential communities, real estate corporations persuaded property holders or their families to sign up for urban renewal programs. Often times, residents signed a contract without any knowledge of the renewal procedure. Many of them realized later that they had forfeited the right to make decisions regarding their own properties.

Figure 1. Two protest banners in Shaoxin Community. One (left) complains of the government's use of the judicial system to demolish homes. Another (right) suggests an economic incentive for the seizure of the land. Shaoxin was one of the two low-income communities where residents were sued by the Taipei City government for "illegal occupation."

Photo credit: Kao Jun-honn.

As a result, the marginalized residents protested. Already underprivileged, they decried the Taipei City government's harsh and unreasonable actions. The protesters contested their homes' forcible demolition. They pointed to the high risk of their becoming homeless. As protest and petition, residents hung banners outside their homes and rallied in the streets (figure 1). Their plight reached other citizens in Taipei and around the island of Taiwan. Soon, many concerned citizens joined in resisting the politico-economic elite's infringement on land, property, and housing rights. They challenged the city government and supported the communities through drawings, music performances, performance art, art installations, graffiti, film, photography, art and history workshops, walking tours, and a flea market. As a result, artists, students, residents, and professionals coalesced in a national housing rights movement (figure 2).

Figure 2. Artist Kao Jun-honn, left, in a housing rights and land justice forum held in Huaguang Community. The residents of Huaguang, as those in Shaoxin, were also mandated by court to self-demolish their homes, self-relocate, and pay “illegal occupation” fines. Music professor, Lin Huijun, right, addresses the audience. Photo credit: Kao Jun-honn.

Participatory Art Responds to Neoliberal City

Participatory art is an approach to making art that emphasizes the audience's direct involvement.¹⁸ The audience's active participation in the creative process is achieved through their corporeal presence. Thus, the participants' intellectual and creative involvement also becomes critical. In many participatory artworks, members of the public contribute materials that inform the work. Within this art genre, the artist is considered as a collaborator and producer of situations, and the commodified art object is replaced by an ongoing or long-term project.¹⁹ Characterized by its public nature, social engagement, collaboration, and collective discussion, participatory art provides an inclusive environment that encourages the examination of serious social matters from creative angles. Its emphasis on social relevance and dialogue makes participatory art a compelling means of communication in the context of urban development. Among markers of neoliberal urban development, which include high-value properties, luxury housing, and cultural institutions, this art genre gives representation to marginalized citizens. Through alliance and partnership, participatory art allows artists and underprivileged residents to rally for an equal right to housing, to urban resources, and to public space in an active and creative manner.

The rise of art works that require active audience participation in the past two decades has prompted various discussions among art historians and critics. Currently, there are several theoretical approaches to participatory art. While Grant Kester and Nicolas Bourriaud champion social interaction rather than the art object itself, Claire Bishop and Hal Foster assert the importance of the artist's intention, the artistic elements, and the work's ability to criticize current social conditions. Additionally, Suzi Gablik's listener-centered paradigm, Suzanne Lacy's understanding of participatory art as metaphor, and Leonie Sandercock's attention to “difference” and new ways of knowing are important perspectives for understanding participatory art.²⁰

In *Conversation Pieces*, Kester showcases several examples of *dialogical art* that make conversations among participants the focus of the work. Kester argues that art critics and historians can interpret these interactions and conversations themselves as the work's aesthetic element. Similarly, Nicolas Bourriaud places great emphasis on dialogue in art production, maintaining that the purpose of art is to connect people, to “produce empathy and sharing” and to “generate bonds.” Bourriaud's “relationist” theory of art maintains that the interaction, or “inter-subjectivity”, becomes the “quintessence of artistic practice.”²¹ Although Kester's and Bourriaud's observation on the conversational, intersubjective elements of participatory art is significant, other criteria, such as context (conceptual, social, and geographical), varying channels and degrees of public participation, artistic form, content, and craftsmanship, should be included to form the basis for critique.

Taking a different standpoint from Kester and Bourriaud, Claire Bishop argues that art works that seek to create friendly collaborations with public audiences risk the danger of losing the critical function so essential to avant-garde art. Bishop refers to Miwon Kwon's work in order to contextualize her position. Kwon observes the departure of public art from "heavy metal art" (object-oriented) to a genre that considers the audience (people-centric). She notes that artists are shifting from the traditional view of public art as located in a public place towards the notion that public art includes the public. However, Bishop complains that artists take the intersubjective space created through participatory projects as the focus and as the medium of their artistic investigation, and they do so by concentrating on the *relational* rather than the *aesthetic*. For Bishop, it is essential to consider, examine, and compare such works *as art*. She prefers examples such as Thomas Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* (2002), Artur Zmijewski's *The Singing Lesson II* (2003), and Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* (2001), which though less aesthetically pleasing and harder to engage, challenge their audiences to think critically about issues such as identity politics, physical disabilities, and conflicts of interest. To Bishop, these artists, along with others discussed in her publication, *Artificial Hell*, are "less interested in a relational aesthetic than in the creative rewards of participation as a politicized working process"²²

Bishop and the art historian Hal Foster both emphasize the importance of social reflexivity and artistic vigorousness for participatory art. Foster worries that the open-ended tendency in relational aesthetics may make art become formless and lose its ability to intervene in the social sphere. He asserts that art should still be able to take a stand, and to do so "in a concrete register that brings together the aesthetic, the cognitive, and the critical."²³ Similarly, Bishop recognizes participatory art's potential to "lend support to" a larger project of equality; however, she maintains the necessity to "sustain a tension between artistic and social critiques." Art, in Bishop's view, should not bear the sole responsibility for devising and implementing a political project, because it is "a form of experimental activity overlapping with the world." According to Bishop and Foster, it is insufficient to simply consider a gathering of people and their collaboration as a good in itself; collaboration must make artistic contribution as well as social inquiry.

In the essay, "Living Takes Many Forms," Shannon Jackson reiterates Bishop's and Foster's emphasis that participatory art is not the "emptied, convivial party of the relational" or the "romantically unmediated notion of 'life' with a generalized spontaneity," yet she affirms participatory art's ability to function both socially and aesthetically. She affirms that participatory art can simultaneously be rigorous, formal, and conceptual when it "addresses, mimics, subverts, and redefines public processes."²⁴ *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at The Front Line* match this description, as they not only engaged the public to think critically about the right to the city, but also reversed participatory art's service to neoliberal urban development. Rather than aiding the neutralization of profit-oriented real estate development, these works exposed problematic urban policies through visual and performance art. And replacing top-down cultural policy tools aimed to eliminate disruptive individuals, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at The Front Line* became bottom-up interventions into existing structural dynamics.²⁵

Lacy, considering the evaluative criteria for participatory art, contends that apart from the artist, audience, and intention of the work, the work functions above all as art, which she defines as a representational model operating as a symbol. She maintains that "perceived notions of change based on political and sociological models and those [notions] extrapolated from personal experiential reports are necessary, but insufficient" in evaluating participatory art. She argues that participatory art must be recognized as a

metaphor that attempts to function simultaneously within both social and aesthetic traditions.²⁶ In this respect, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* could be interpreted as symbols of new forms of urban resistance, which mustered trans-social strata populations, who then dedicated themselves to interdisciplinary, long term collaboration. Artistically, both borrowed military terminologies, such as “army, infiltrate, front line,” and combined mundane objects, cultural references, and everyday acts as protest performance.

Moreover, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* are to be contextualized within a global network of similar practices. These two works expand the scope of the currently Eurocentric discourse on participatory art.²⁷ Together with examples such as *Medical Care for the Homeless* in Austria and *Project Row Houses* in the United States, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* bring a critical lens to issues of housing, urban development, and the right to the city.²⁸ They point out that regionally and globally, artists and activists are employing participatory art to counteract inequitable urban renewal. The Taipei works will serve as a window to the larger field of global activities and ramifications of contemporary participatory art.

Within Taiwan’s housing rights movement, participatory protest art played a central role in challenging profit-centered urban (re)development. As will be discussed below, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* used diverse creative methods to garner attention and to create alternative forums for monitoring urban development. Contrary to the conflicts, divisiveness, exclusion, and a detachment from public interest that characterize Taipei’s urban renewal, the responding participatory artworks are premised on communication, collaboration, inclusion, and equality. Through interdisciplinary, trans-social strata collaborations, this coalition called upon governments and city planners to center urban development on citizens’ common welfare and living quality.

Politically, *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* are significant for Taiwan, considering the country’s colonial history. These two participatory street performance art pieces visualize the level of freedom and confidence that the citizens of Taiwan fought for and gained during the transition from the martial law period to the recent years. The oppression of freedom of speech gave way to assertive social and political expressions. The right to assemble and protest may be taken for granted in many countries, particularly in North America and Europe. However, in Taiwan this right is not a given for its citizens, for the Assembly and Parade Act, instituted in 1988 after the lifting of the martial law, still bore the “Martial Law-period mindset, mandating the application for government approval prior to any outdoor assembly or demonstration.”²⁹ Through *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line*, the artists and participants spoke out and acted with conviction, vigor, and creative thinking. And they did so without any application or concern for government approval. Instead, through interdisciplinary, trans-social strata collaborations, this coalition called upon governments and city planners to center urban development on citizens’ common welfare and living quality.

›\ ACT and *Operation Little Barbarossa*

In 2010, controversies surrounding the Taipei International Flora Exposition prompted the art collective ›\ ACT to respond with a series of participatory performance art actions. *Operation Little Barbarossa* was the most complex of them all. ›\ ACT consisted a team of graduate art students and volunteers from three universities in northern and southern Taiwan. The fact that its members came from different regions of the country illustrated that discontent extended beyond the capital city. The 2010 Taipei International Flora Exposition, which ran from November 6, 2010 until April 25, 2011, was meant to

showcase the diverse and unique flora of Taiwan and to promote international trade. However, academics and social activists criticized that this Exposition was a front for real estate speculation.³⁰ /j\ACT elaborated on this critique in *act 01*, stating that city officials and developers used the Flora Exposition as an excuse to demolish unsightly homes, integrate land, and build new residential and commercial complexes. The “Taipei Beautiful” policy and the consequent “fake parks” were two major components in Taipei’s building policy that came under scrutiny. To support the critique, /j\ACT printed an article titled “There are Plants in the Parks; There are No Houses for Citizens.”³¹

This article explained how the Taipei Beautiful policy produced temporary “fake parks” that benefit not the environment but developers (figure 3). The report indicated that more than seventy empty lots became “fake parks” under the Taipei Beautiful Series Two policy. The reason these parks were called “fake” was that in eighteen months the “useless” small lawns, devoid of any greening effect, would be converted into floor area bonus, allowing land owners and developers to build structures that are one and a half times the original legal height limit. Thus, the temporary, green patches were in effect preparatory lands for luxury residences (figure 4).

Figure 3. One of the temporary “fake parks.” Source: Kao Jun-Honn.



Figure 4. Another temporary green space in Taipei. Source: Kao Jun-Honn.

/j\ACT presented its own suspicion toward the Taipei Beautiful policy in a section titled “Taipei Beautiful Point-to-Point Investigation.” The collective maintained that the Taipei City government disregarded the basic principles of green landscape planning, such as bio-diversity and foundation water retention index. Rather than upholding the notion of sustainability in its efforts to create extensive green landscapes, the administration used “green aesthetics” as a catchphrase to produce numerous unintended green lawns that destroy Taipei’s urban texture.³²

Moreover, the zoning bonus ordinance, a regulation that grants additional floor area building allowance, enabled the demolition of existing historic structures, another disconcerting result of the Taipei Beautiful policy. For example, due to the lack of official “historic building” status, several elegant Japanese-style buildings were destroyed without restrictions.³³ These buildings represent Japanese colonialism, an integral part of Taiwan’s history. Their physical disappearance eradicates important visual symbols that remind Taiwan’s people of their national history.

Though economic incentives are the apparent cause for the rapid and rampant destruction of Taipei’s unique architecture, Taiwan’s colonial history might be the primary reason for a widespread disregard for these valuable cultural assets. Ironically, although

most of Taiwan's people initially celebrated Japan's departure and welcomed the Chinese Nationalists (KMT), they soon realized that the KMT was a militant party that intended to use Taiwan as a temporary base to retake China. The KMT's political ambitions, its sense of cultural superiority, and a lack of genuine interest in Taiwan's welfare precipitated the island-wide pillage and rape as well as the subsequent February 28 incident and White Terror.

Like Japan, the KMT government coveted Taiwan's rich natural resources and labor and treated the non-Mandarin speaking population—the Taiwanese-speaking, Haka-speaking, and aboriginal groups—as inferior. Discrimination and segregation were common in professional and everyday settings. Taiwan's people, who imagined a return to the “warm embrace of motherland,” were greatly disappointed because they not only remained “second-class citizens” but were traumatized into another silent oppression under a new military dictatorship. Historical factors may explain the government's aggressive development schemes and its thoughtless demolition of older buildings island-wide. The KMT's antagonism toward the Japanese colonizers and their derision of non-Mandarin speaking groups contributed to Taiwan's current cultural identity confusion, fragmentation, and political indifference. Despite the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, numerous fine Fujian and Japanese style residences continued to be demolished in the urbanization process of the 1900s.³⁴

The International Taipei Flora Exposition did not enrich citizens' cultural awareness. On the contrary, it was superficial, extravagant, financially unsustainable, and environmentally destructive. The article, “Fragrant Flowers or Lethal Weapon Iron Tribulus? The Sustainable Actions and Strategies Activated by the Unjustified,” supports this idea. In this critique by the architecture professor and member of OURs (Organization of Urban R-s), Huang Jui-mao argued against the Flora Exposition from various perspectives.³⁵ First, Huang maintained that Taipei's citizens had little use for the obscure, transient “fake parks,” which lack any recreational facilities or community interaction. Second, Huang reiterated that the Flora Exposition benefited only government officials and developers but was financially nonviable for Taiwan. From a marketing perspective, he pointed out that the “International” Flora Exposition, contrary to its title, targeted domestic consumers rather than international visitors.³⁶ Thirdly, Huang suggested that in the pre-exposition preparation, the city government's true motivation was to clean up the city's “underdeveloped” areas and to “create stratified landscapes in order to enlarge the real estate market.” Huang criticized the Taipei City government's developmentalism-driven urban policies and argued that the city administration could have used this large-scale event as an opportunity to advance urban infrastructural adjustment by reaching a common ground on Taipei's urban development. Unfortunately, communication and dialogue with the general public were “non-existent”; instead, contestation for urban spaces began in full-force. Furthermore, the city's motivation to create a “bourgeoisified urban landscape” became apparent when the officials employed the police to disperse homeless persons.³⁷

Thus, Taipei City's urban policy recalls the uneven urban development as discussed by Deutsche, Zukins, and Miles, who mainly refer to American examples.³⁸ Taipei's case demonstrates that the exclusion of the professional-working class and the further alienation of underprivileged citizens were similarly occurring in Asia. In Taipei, it is clear that the city government and associated real estate developers utilized the 2010 Taipei “International” Flora Exposition as a gateway to boost the local housing market. The simultaneous “urban development” was ineffective, detrimental, and exclusive because it overlooked public participation in urban policy-making and solely benefited the politico-

economic elite.³⁹ It is evident that the Flora Exposition was used as a cover for “urban cleanup”.⁴⁰

Expressing the same concerns, /j\ ACT denounced the city government’s interest-driven cultural policy by driving into the Exposition. To name their first anti-Flora Exposition action, /j\ ACT took inspiration from world history. The title, *Operation Little Barbarossa* (小巴巴羅薩行動) came from Operation Barbarossa, Germany’s plan to invade Russia during World War II. Operation Barbarossa itself was named after Frederick Barbarossa, a medieval Holy Roman Emperor. Barbarossa means “red beard” in Italian. This name originated from the northern Italian cities Frederick Barbarossa attempted to rule.⁴¹ The name was a mark of both fear and respect. /j\ ACT appropriated this German imperial title in a mocking manner to highlight its own anti-capitalist actions. Kao Jun-Honn (figure 2), the art collective’s leader, described this piece as an “urban spatial guerilla operation”.⁴² *Operation Little Barbarossa* aimed to distribute *act* publications. These booklets meant to inform the public about the problem of cultural manipulation for neoliberal urban development.



Figure 5. The original BMW318. Björn Strömlom [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or CC BY-SA 2.5 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

For *Operation Little Barbarossa*, /j\ ACT artists went to great lengths to fashion a 100 percent man-powered car, a BMW318. This delivery car was strictly modeled with a 1:1 ratio after an original BMW318 (figure 5). /j\ ACT chose this particular car to play a joke on the real estate development corporations, which favored the BMW318 for company transportation. Kao also noted that the choice of the BMW318 was satirical because it is also the car model preferred by gangster members in Taiwan.⁴³ The selecting of the BMW318 contained contextual references specific to Taiwan. In this case, it mocked the country’s real estate and mafia cultures. The BMW318’s association with prestige appealed to both the crime syndicate and the commercial real estate sector. Considering this history, /j\ ACT seemed to imply that the existing profit-driven neoliberal urban development, championed by real estate corporations and supported by the Taipei city government, was criminal activity.

/j\ ACT’s dedication to its cause was evident in the time and effort they devoted to handcrafting the BMW318 vehicle. To build the car, the artists measured their BMW318 model with a precision ruler and created a blueprint on the computer. For the model car’s central structure, the artists repurposed a four-person tandem bicycle. /j\ ACT members made a frame for the car by soldering two-inch angle iron to the tandem bicycle (figure 6). High-density styrofoam was then added to the frame to make the body (figure 7). The

artists carved, sculpted, and sanded the styrofoam into shape, a challenging and time-consuming process. They then painted the shell black, and applied varnish to make it waterproof. Members also designed paper tires and wheels, signal lights, license plates, and the BMW logo to make the machine more realistic (figure 8). In the end, the team had no time to install the glass windows and turn signals before their planned journey.⁴⁴ On a morning in November 2010, 小ACT set out in their new BMW318 to infiltrate the Taipei International Flora Exposition. Two art students, Lai Jun-Hong (賴俊濬) and Lin Jao-Yu (林昭宇), powered the car. They pedaled from Kuandu, a northern rural district of Taipei, to Yuanshan Station, which was located in Taipei City proper. En route, they traveled along the agricultural roads of Kuandu Plain. Lai and Lin “refueled” at the Formosa Gas Station on Chengde Road, where they distributed the *act* booklets. At the Giant Bicycle Shop on Zhongshan North Road, they changed a flat tire. As they approached the Flora Exposition, all the intersections were guarded by police officers. At this point, the 小ACT riders merged into the fast lane by accident at the intersection of Zhongshan North Road and Minzhu Road. The police soon came to investigate. The “drivers” explained that they were there to celebrate the Flora Exposition. The police, believing in their story, allowed them to resume their course. After much labor, 小ACT succeeded in penetrating the Flora Exposition to disseminate their publication, *act 1*.



Figure 6. The car's frame and “engine,” made of angle iron (a length of iron with an L-shaped cross section for structural support) and a tandem bicycle. Photo credit: *act 02, 1.*



Figure 7. The car's body, made of high-density styrofoam. Photo credit: Kao Jun-Honn.



Figure 9. A scooter approaches /\\ ACT's BMW to obtain the *act* magazine. Source: Kao Jun-Honn.

Edited by Kao, the booklet, *act 1*, and later *act 2* and *3*, examined neoliberal urban development and real estate speculation. The illustrations and writings explained why the Flora Exposition was deleterious to Taiwan's finance, culture, and environment. Through *act 1-3*, /\\ ACT called the public into small collective, participatory actions. Though small, these disruptive interventions possessed potential for significant ramifications. According to Kao, *Operation Little Barbarossa* was very successful.⁴⁵ On the road, the artists did not have to make much effort to attract people because out of curiosity, they ran or rode toward the BMW318 (figure 9). The "drivers" would distribute the *act* booklets from within the car. Kao estimated that the team gave out two thousand copies of their publication. During this performance, the news television also continued to broadcast about *Operation Little Barbarossa*. As journalists interviewed /\\ ACT that day, they were able to spread their message to a broader audience. The *Operation Little Barbarossa* video documentary shows the drivers distributing pink *act 01* magazine to pedestrians, gas station workers, and people at bus stops. The documentary photographs that Kao provided depict people focused on reading the *act* pamphlets at the YuanShan MRT Station Plaza, which was opposite the Flora Exposition venue (figures 10 and 11). Through laborious sculpture-making and arduous, interactive performance art, as well as research and writing, *Operation Little Barbarossa* reached out to the citizens of Taiwan in a creative and educational manner.⁴⁶

For the evaluation of *Operation Little Barbarossa*, Kao's criteria for success were the completion of "infiltration" by bringing the vehicle into the event venue, the audience's and participants' level of enthusiasm, the dissemination of ideas, and national media attention. In terms of Bishop's and Foster's emphasis on social reflexivity and artistic vigorousness, *Operation Little Barbarossa* also met the requirements. The whimsical, handcrafted nature of the BMW car coupled with the labor intensive art-making and performance to make pertinent, well-researched information known to Taipei citizens. However, the nature of this performance made further discussions between the artists and the general public about the *act* magazine content implausible because of the brief contact between the two parties. The scene in figure 10, where a professor led his students in reading, with a camera recorder on a tripod in the background, appears to be more of a staged scene. Yet Bishop, referring to André Breton's analysis of the 1921 Dada Season and deducing a "model of delayed reaction," reminds art historians and critics to delay conclusive judgement of participatory artworks, as their significance, when not understood at the time of their occurrence or in their immediate results, may resonate in the future.⁴⁷



Figure 10. The organizers and participants read the *act* pamphlets intently at the Yuan-Shan Metro Station plaza. Photo credit: Kao Jun-Honn.



Figure 11. Seated, students read the booklets published and distributed by /J\ ACT, *act 1* and *2*. Photo credit: Kao Jun-Honn.

Two parallel characteristics permeate the art of /J\ ACT. On the one hand, the artists created an oppositional, battle-like quality in their works. They employed military terms like “army” and “infiltrate” to describe their activities. On the other hand, humor, irony, and even a sense of mischievousness abounded in *Operation Little Barbarossa*. This work was the kind of participatory art that challenged people to reconsider the social, economic, governmental, and aesthetic aspects of their everyday life. The same tone and purpose would be echoed in *Cooking at the Front Line*.

TAVUR

Operation Little Barbarossa provides a glimpse of the citizens’ critique of the neoliberal city in Taipei. While /J\ ACT labored to bring awareness to the various issues surrounding Taipei’s profit-centered urban development, such as real-estate speculation, Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal (TAVUR) focused on housing rights. This organization’s efforts are exemplified by its involvement in Wenlinyuan, the most controversial demolition case in Taipei in 2010. *Cooking at the Front Line*, a student activist-run kitchen at Wenlinyuan, represents the cross-disciplinary collaboration in TAVUR.

It is important to mention the three central figures of TAVUR: Peng Long Shan, Huang Huiyu, and Chen Hongyin (figures 12–14). They became critically aware of Taiwan’s urban socio-spatial inequality through different avenues during the same period of time. With different roles as a resident, an art student, and a student of urban planning, respectively,

Peng, Huang, and Chen converged in a forceful, unified, and momentous movement to contest urban inequality. Using a listener-centered paradigm to give voice to marginalized residents, TAVUR became a national, trans-social strata support network. The phrase “Land is not a commodity” encapsulates TAVUR’s ideals.⁴⁸ Peng Long Shan, a motorbike mechanic and shop owner, became a victim of inequitable urban renewal laws when he was pressured and sued by Sen Yeh Construction Company, after refusing to join the urban revival program in his community, Yungchun. His determination to protect his family’s ancestral property, the learning of other citizen’s stories of oppression, and a strong sense of unequal treatment motivated Peng to organize The Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal (TAVUR) in 2010.



Figure 12. Peng (right), working at Wenlinyuan post-demolition. His T-shirt reads, “Home, not for sale, not for demolition.” Photo credit: Shih Kuohsun 施國勳.

Huang Huiyu was a graduate student in the Department of Trans-Disciplinary Arts, Taipei National University of the Arts. During her residency, she began to question the relationship between the arts, urban renewal, and community residents. Huang and a group of artists received space to work and exhibit in emptied buildings awaiting reconstruction in Chungjung, Chungzheng District. This area was renamed the Urban Core Arts District by the JUT Development Group. During this time, Huang observed little connection between the art creations in Urban Core and its surroundings. As she investigated, she became frustrated by the fact that information on the fate and future of this community remained unobtainable. As a result, Huang decided to create a site-specific piece about urban renewal. Besides research on urban renewal in Taiwan, Huang employed two methods common in participatory art: interview and conversation. First, she interviewed residents in Chungjung. Huang then organized two symposia that involved both the art community and residents. The symposia asked the question, “What does urban renewal mean?” Following the interviews and symposia, Huang curated a traditional group art exhibition that featured photographs of residents and her fieldwork findings. Huang raised public awareness of and complicated the dominant urban redevelopment system through these efforts.



Figure 13. Huang speaking outside a court hearing for the Wenlinyuan Case.
Photo credit: 施逸翔 Shih Yi-hsiang, The Taiwan Association for Human Rights.

Huang's quest led her to a conference and a reading group on urban renewal at National Taiwan University, where she met Chen Hungyin, a graduate of Urban Studies. Having studied urban planning, Chen Hungyin became highly aware of urban renewal controversies in Hong Kong and South Korea while she was working in Korea. Upon her return to Taiwan in September 2010, Chen was shocked by the prevalence of urban renewal programs in Taiwan. After Huang and Chen met, they and several other concerned art and urban studies students visited Peng Long Shan in Yungchun in order to learn more about urban renewal at the community level. Eventually, Huang, Chen, and seven other students joined TAVUR in 2010.⁴⁹



Figure 14. Chen (second left), speaking on stage in an anti-urban renewal rally, August 18, 2013. Photo credit: 楊明仁

The Wenlinyuan Controversy

Beginning on December 25, 2011, passengers of the Taipei Metro could see a bright, multicolored banner affixed onto a building as they passed the Shilin Metro Station in northern Taipei (figure 15). The building was called Wenlinyuan. It belonged to the Wangs, a family that contested the forced demolition of their ancestral home. The colorful banner featured 100 small figures holding hands and a large, red and black slogan, "Home, Not for Sale and Not for Demolition." This collage on fabric was the result of a participatory art event titled "One Hundred People Paint to Protect the Wangs." Organized by TAVUR on the evening of December 24, 2011, this event invited the general public to Wenlinyuan to participate. The resultant protest banner with painted figures was attached to a sizable piece of fabric (figure 16). On the banner, each figure was connected by a hand to show

solidarity and protection. Different signs and phrases were also inscribed on the figures, such as a dollar sign, the words, “home,” “stay,” and the phrases, “not for sale,” and “you also became the victim.” The banner was both a statement and an invitation to its viewers. It conveyed the Wangs’ and their supporters’ determination to protect Wenlinyuan from demolition. The banner also urged its viewers to learn more about the controversy by visiting TAVUR’s Facebook page. “One Hundred People Paint to Protect the Wangs” held significance because it pointed to the level of attention to and support for housing rights in Taipei, and by extension, in Taiwan. Moreover, it demonstrated increased civic engagement by youths and young professionals of Taiwan. Furthermore, participatory art became the tool to garner momentum and spread the message.



Figure 15. Banners were hung on the Wang family residence, Wenlinyuan, to petition and protest impending demolition. Photo credit: TAVUR.



Figure 16. A close up of the One Hundred People Paint banner. Photo credit: TAVUR.

Despite the “One Hundred People Paint” banner and several protests and press conferences, Wenlinyuan was eventually forcibly demolished in the early morning of March 28, 2012. On the evening of March 27, more than 300 students and supporters gathered in front of Wenlinyuan to protect it from the anticipated forced demolition.⁵⁰ Many of them lay on sleeping bags laid out on the ground, ready to resist eviction (figure 17). Others held discussions under a tent decorated with colorful figures. The front of the tent also displayed the phrases “Urban Renewal; Forced Demolition; Unconstitutional.” According to Peng, around one thousand police were sent to evict the Wangs and all those present (figure 18). After the eviction, the Wangs and their supporters returned to construct a temporary hut next to the rubbles (figure 19). However, violent eviction was not the end of the TAVUR members’ troubles. They continued to receive pressure and threats from developers. The developer Leyoung Construction Limited employed gangsters to taunt, tease, and harass the Wangs and the Alliance staff. A bulldozer parked in the demolished area continued its attempt to destroy the hut and remove the remaining rubbles (figure 20). Violent clashes occurred when TAVUR members tried to

stop construction workers from building illegally. In response, student supporters took watches to guard the Wangs' property. They also video-recorded the construction workers' movements as evidence (figure 21).



Figure 17. More than 300 students and supporters camped in front of Wenlinyuan to protect it from the anticipated forced demolition on the night of March 27 to the early mornings of March 28, 2012. Photo credit: TAVUR.



Figure 18. Around one thousand policemen were sent to remove five hundred supporters guarding Wenlinyuan. Photo credit: TAVUR.



Figure 19. A press conference held outside the temporary hut the

students helped build. Photo credit:
TAVUR.



Figure 20. An excavator clears the rubble at the demolished Wenlinyuan.

Photo credit: TAVUR.



Figure 21. A student supporter videorecording the activities at Wenlinyuan's demolished site; Satirical illustrations were painted on the temporary hut. Photo credit: Shih Kuohsun 施國勳, published by Storm Media Group.

Cooking at the Front Line

Eight months after the eviction incident and the intensive guarding of the Wangs' land, the TAVUR student members aimed to set a different tone for Wenlinyuan. They recognized the existing sentiments of struggle and conflict, and hoped to project a warmer, more convivial and inviting atmosphere. The result was the addition of a kitchen adjacent to the temporary hut. The student staff of TAVUR decided to build a kiln. Their intention was to allow all supporters to collaborate and become acquainted with one another through this complicated process. Soon, the kitchen project, *Cooking at the Front Line*, began to produce savory dishes and breads in assorted shapes and flavors. These creations were shared among visitors and delivered to other communities that were struggling with eviction. Contrary to the destructive demolition and the constant conflicts that had characterized Wenlinyuan, *Cooking at the Front Line* produced products that could cheer and sustain residents and community members. The making and sharing of food from the *Cooking at the Front Line* kitchen added a softer side to the hard struggles against eviction.⁵¹

Though based in Taipei, *Cooking at the Front Line*'s activism spread beyond the capital city. For example, its members traveled to various locations around Taiwan to cook for housing rights and other socially-conscious groups (figure 24). On their journeys, *Front Line* members exchanged stories and information with whom they encountered. To reach out to the online population, the group's blog featured fully-illustrated recipes used in the *Front Line* kitchen (figure 25). Moreover, contributions from all parts of Taiwan enriched the project's participatory aspect. Supporters and small business farmers would donate produce to express solidarity. In addition to a turkey, a duck, strawberries, and rice, these gifts included mangos produced in Chiayi (嘉義) and mailed from Tainan (台南). Sometimes, the fresh products were a thank you present from recipients of *Cooking at the Front Line*'s gourmet breads. Other times, the donating parties received goods from the *Front Line* kitchen, which incorporated the ingredients they donated. For instance, *Front Line* members turned the mangos from Chiayi into jam and dried pieces before blending them into homemade nuggets. They then sent some to the mango grower in Chiayi.⁵² This traveling back and forth of raw ingredients and their final transformation illustrated a sense of reciprocity. This type of alternative economy stood in sharp contrast to the neoliberal framework that dominated Taipei's urban renewal. Furthermore, the building of relationships through food and networking demonstrated the relational and practical nature of *Cooking at the Front Line*. The breath and depth of research required to understand different rights-related case studies showed the *Front Line* members' inquisitiveness. Their ability to synthesize and imbed ideas in story-like, readable blog posts revealed their tact. Their power, creativity, and craftsmanship were attested by the successful recipe experiments and the output of quality food.⁵³



Figure 22. Students built a kiln, complete with an artistic sign and specially designed latches, for TAVUR's new kitchen, *Cooking at the Front Line*.
Photo credit: *Cooking at the Front Line*.



Figure 23. A student baker presents the finished product. Source: Cooking at the Front Line.



Figure 24. Cooking at the Front Line members wearing masks and cooking on a sustainable farm for workshop participants. Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.



Figure 25. A recipe for roasted duck with accompanying illustration on the group's blog. Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.

Regarding design, artistic intention became evident in all aspects of *Cooking at the Front Line*. For example, bulldozer-shaped latches were crafted and fitted onto the kiln's door. An intricate "OVEN" trademark was placed in the center of the brick arch that framed the kiln opening (figure 22). Also, each type of bread was carved with "signature patterns" that expressed the members' creativity (figure 23). Besides the handcrafted artisan breads, the most singular aspect of *Cooking at the Front Line* was the outfit worn by its members (figure 24). While the clothing was typical of those worn by Taiwanese youth, a few accessories stood out. They include hats, helmet, masks, gloves, and scarves. Cute, comical adornments were often combined with edgier embellishments. For example, a female student always wore a cartoon-like mask and mitten or gloves. Her mask

resembled a teddy bear's face that was at once funny and angry-looking (figure 23). The mitten and gloves might have been worn for practicality, though they also added a sense of strength and theatricality. Another female student sported a light blue headpiece in the appearance of a soft toy dog. This gentle-looking mascot was paired with scarves that covered part of this student's face. In the same image, a female student modeled a bright yellow mask that appeared to be Pikachu's face.⁵⁴ The Pikachu, cartoon bear, and cartoon dog symbols represent the adoration of cuteness in Japanese popular culture. As demonstrated by *Cooking at the Front Line*, Japanese popular culture influenced Taiwan's youth even at the university level. Meanwhile, the male student members often wore masks and scarves that concealed their faces and necks. This attire made them appear rebellious and somewhat threatening (figures 23, 24, 26–28, 29). According to the *Cooking at the Front Line* blog, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos inspired this fashion choice. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos was the *nom de guerre* of the Mexican Zapatista Army of National Liberation's main ideologist, spokesperson, and de facto leader. By combining references to popular culture and history of revolution in their outfits, the *Cooking at the Front Line* students achieved a unique visual blend of charm and subversion.⁵⁵



Figure 26. Students wearing various disguise posing in the tiny kitchen.
Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.



Figure 27. The Front Line members in assertive poses inside their kitchen.
Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.



Figure 28. More aggressive poses with outfits inspired by the Mexican Zapatista leader, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. Photo credit: *Cooking at the Front Line*.

When photographed, the students also incorporated various kitchen tools and food items as props. This helped conceal their identity. The props, along with the outfits, created images that were at once a comical, absurd, and aggressive. A special bread peel featured an illustration of a human face (figure 26-27). Cutouts were made onto the metal plate to create a menacing expression. The face featured furrowed brows, narrow eyes, flaring nostrils, and a wide-open mouth with only a few teeth remaining. In addition to retrieving bread from the brick kiln, the bread peel can function as an offensive or defensive weapon. The students combined everyday objects with their on guard gestures to convey a determination and tenacity to fight (figure 26-27). In one photograph, five students occupy the narrow kitchen space in various positions (figure 26). Each holds a common kitchen tool as they stare directly into the camera lens. Two male students in hats and masks sit on the kitchen walls with a bread peel and blender in hand. They flank the seated female student in the bear mask, who covers a piece of rounded bread with her gloved hands. The manner in which she holds the bread could suggest protection. Another female student stands behind, as she grips a cleaver and a chopping board that could be used as an attacking knife and a shield. Further back, another student leans across the top of the kiln, seeming to claim ownership. While the height of her position is impressive, her raised leg, faux mustache, and what appears to be a pink snake, produce a farcical effect. Overall, this group photograph communicates that the chef team is serious about occupying and defending Wenlinyuan and its makeshift kitchen. The same spirit is evident in other photographs (figures 26 and 27). Two students in the front positioned tomatoes and cleaning brushes over their eyes as disguise (figure 27). The student at the back covers his face with the specially designed bread peel. Protruding horizontally from the kitchen wall, he resembles a ninja. In another, the Front Line members pose in front of the graffiti wall of the temporary hut (figure 28). This dramatic setting and the students' poses make them appear as if they are ready for battle. Visible in the foreground are bulldozer treads and rubble. Three students stand atop or behind the sandbag wall, which is surrounded by yellow tape that signals "no crossing." The student to the left, wearing a mask, holds out a bunch of green onions as if to challenge any intruders. The middle figure stands in defiance with hands at his waist. The one on the right squats as he displays a large pot and a colander. Their stances declare to the viewer that *Cooking at the Front Line* is not threatened but is prepared to keep defending citizens' housing rights.

The visual presentations and the performative elements of *Cooking at the Front Line* are to be viewed as symbols and tools for urban resistance. Huang noted that their outfits, particularly the masks, served to "emphasize the sense of unity in that space of protest." "What mattered even more were the team's intentions and activities. Cooking and managing the kitchen provided internal healing and empowerment."⁵⁶

In addition to baking and cooking, students also utilized their artistic talents to design notebooks for fundraising (figure 29). The light brown color of the notebooks' covers reminds one of earth, the land. This subject was a central concern for *Cooking at the Front Line*. The notebooks also include illustrations, poems, and phrases that comment on land and housing issues. There is a clever juxtaposition of sound-alike Taiwanese and Mandarin phrases captioning the small illustrations that, while obvious to those fluent in both Taiwanese and Mandarin, is lost on the non-Taiwanese speaking Chinese KMT settlers and the average Occidental reader. For example, the first half of the titles, "My house, no place," and "My rice field, no property" are in Taiwanese, and the second half is in Mandarin. The two small drawings, one of rice plants and the other of a damaged building baring its concrete and rebar, match the two phrases and symbolize two distinct periods of Taiwan's history: the pre-industrial, agricultural period and the wave of demolition during present-day urban redevelopment (figures 29 and 30).



Figure 29. A member holding the front cover of the notebook designed by *Cooking at the Front Line*. The phrase, "No house, no place" with the drawing of a damaged building. Photo credit: *Cooking at the Front Line*.



Figure 30. The caption, "No land, no property" and the illustration of rice plants. Photo credit: *Cooking at the Front Line*.

Two poems composed by the students for the notebooks further illustrate *Cooking at the Front Line*'s critique of Taiwan's contemporary values, land policy, and lifestyle. The first poem, "Yesterday," reads: "As it has always been, every year is harvest year: cedar, rice, sugar cane, high mountain tea; exchanging containers full of goods for tomorrow's prosperity. Yesterday, I heard we broke the foreign exchange reserves record again. I simply heard through word of mouth." The second poem, "Today," reads: "As it has always been, we always relinquish mountains, forests, rivers, and streams to corporations; rich farming land exchanged for concrete buildings. Parents sent to nursing homes, children entrusted to kindergartens, youthful years mortgaged to banks. We concede all limited resources until we lose our foothold." These poems contrast two ways of lives. In the past, people made a sustainable and profitable living by working the land. In the present society, family life has become fragmented, and natural assets are exploited to cause financial hardship for many. Two detailed, black and white drawings in the notebook visualize the "Yesterday" and "Today" poems. They depict four mountains, with three representing "Yesterday" and one representing "Today" (figures 31–33).

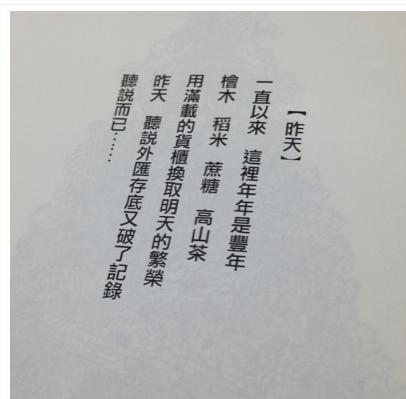


Figure 31. "Yesterday," a poem in the notebook. Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.

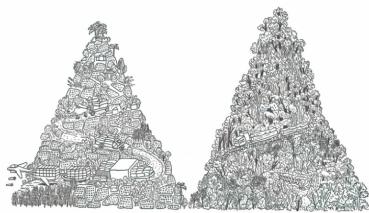


Figure 32. The illustration that accompanied the poem, "Yesterday." Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.

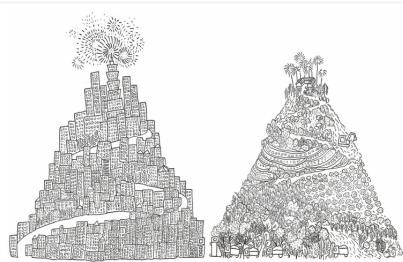


Figure 33. Another drawing that illustrated both poems, "Yesterday" and "Today," in the Front Line notebook. Photo credit: Cooking at the Front Line.

The illustrations portray agricultural products, rice, cedar, and tea being grown and transported by plane, train, and trucks for export (figure 32 and mountain on the right of figure 33). Atop the mountain at the right side of figure 33, one can see the *san ho yuan*, the typical residential architecture in agricultural Taiwanese society. Beetle nut trees, common to the country, surround the living complex. In contrast, the mountain on the left side displays a mountain overtaken by high-rise buildings (figure 33). A New Year's Eve firework display from the Taipei 101, a landmark skyscraper, crowns the mountain top. Trees exist only sparsely along the main road. The illustration of the poems deepens the understanding of the texts.

Whether through playful charm or combative stance, *Cooking at the Front Line* applied a unique approach to protest. Through the making and sharing of food, this group transformed a space of hard struggle, trauma, and antagonism into a softer place of creativity, nurturing, and fellowship. For members of *Cooking at the Front Line*, their artistic practice became a way of sharing and critical reflection. Kiln construction, packaging designs, posters, new recipes, and handmade utensils were central to a dialogue on land and housing equity. More importantly, these creative elements spurred participants to reconsider the meaning of art in everyday life. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, *Cooking at the Front Line* merged art and social activism with everyday acts. Social activists and supporters rallied for urban equality as they enjoyed food in a space of contestation.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In the struggle against a neoliberal Taipei, its citizens persisted. Protest art became a prominent element of Taipei's housing rights movement. Notably, jovial and contentious tones coexisted in Taiwan's protest art and housing rights movement. Moreover, the working dynamics of *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* transcended social, cultural, and economic differences. Foremost, the participants identified as "citizens." They exercised and defended a "right to the city" as they resisted forced demolitions of homes and communities. These citizen-activists challenged the neoliberalization of Taipei through everyday activities. Ordinary acts, such as driving and cooking, became powerful performative gestures and protest statements. *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* also drew inspiration from multiple cultures for its content and artistic expression. They reflected an appreciation of Taiwanese history and culture, as well as a knowledge of regional and global cultural trends, such as German and Mexican history, as well as Japanese popular culture.

Operation Little Barbarossa and *Cooking at the Front Line* demonstrate that participatory art can produce significant social and artistic commentary while embracing

its interpersonal and collective aspects. At the same time, their more nuanced and complex approaches require a broader interpretive framework. The housing rights movement in Taipei often combine concrete art objects with performances and social activities. Artistic craftsmanship and the artists' interest in discursive, interactive collaboration are both evident, and the intention of individual works can be multi-dimensional, varied, and distinct. For instance, good will, the desire for collective action, social transformation, and an increased understanding of specific communities, as well as a critical antagonism that scrutinizes governmental policy and educates the public, all characterize *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line*. These protest artworks rely on active audience participation to create aesthetically sound pieces that form powerful social critiques of past and present urban development schemes. They also illustrate a broader definition of participatory art, as a genre that not only depends on but can also be initiated by the general public.

From 2010 to 2013, participatory art played an important role in facilitating the reexamination of Taipei's neoliberalist urban development. This artistic approach allowed artists and participants to envision, to demand, and to enact change into existing politico-economic establishments. In Taipei's housing rights movement, the alliance of activists combined different art forms to spread the same political message: the need for more transparency, equality, and citizen participation in urban governance. The interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* leads to a fluid interpretation of participatory art. They indicate that this artistic genre comprises diverse adaptations rather than a defined set of parameters. These works illustrate that conviviality and criticality can coincide in participatory art. Moreover, they affirm participatory art's ability to agitate problematic dynamics in the (re)construction of cities in the globalized present.

Notes

1. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London/New York: Verso, 2012), 67. 
2. Jamie Peck and A. Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 380–381. 
3. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "A Fragmented Globality," in *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 53–54. 
4. Peck and Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," 380–381. 
5. Pierre Bourdieu, *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market II* (New York: New Press, 2003), 34–35. 
6. Catherine Kingfisher and Jeff Maskovsky, "The Limits of Neoliberalism," *Critique of Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (2008): 115. 
7. Gordon Fletcher, *The Keynesian Revolution and Its Critics: Issues of Theory and Policy for the Monetary Production Economy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1989), xix–xxi, 88, 189–191, 234–238, 256–261; Peck and Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," 380–381; Lee Zong-Rong, "Taiwan's Intercorporate Familial Network" (台灣企業間的親屬網路), *Academia Sinica Weekly* 1261 (2010). 
8. Lee's Chinese name is 李宗榮; Academia Sinica, or 中央研究院, is Taiwan's most preeminent academic institution. The Chinese phrases for political emancipation and economic liberalization are 政治解放 放鬆管制. "We are Family," interview with Lee Zong-Rong, ed. Kao Jun-Honn (Tainan: Tainan National University of the Arts, 2010), Act 03, 8. 
9. The Chinese names for these three families are: 高鐵, 遠傳, and 台灣大哥大 respectively. 

10. Lee, *Act 03*, 8. [D](#)
11. Huang and Chang, "The Grand Families"; Lee Zong-Rong, "Taiwan's Intercorporate Familial Network"; David Skarica, *The Great Super Cycle: Profit from the Coming Inflation Tidal Wave and Dollar Devaluation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2010), 208. [D](#)
12. Huang and Chang, "The Grand Families of Taiwan." [D](#)
13. Lee, *Act 03*, 8 [D](#)
14. See Huang Ching-Hsuan and Chang Hsiang-Yi, "The Grand Families of Taiwan," *CommonWealth Magazine* 462, <https://english.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=923>, December 16, 2010; also Lee, *Act 03*, 9. [D](#)
15. Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 67. [D](#)
16. "1989-2014 Urban Housing Movement (Shell Less Snails Movement)" 1989-2014 都市住宅運動（無殼蝸牛運動）, National Taiwan University, Graduate Institute of Building & Planning. <http://www.bp.ntu.edu.tw/?p=3290>, accessed October 23, 2018; 陳雅雯. 十年蝸牛路的成績單—專訪無住屋者團結組織理事長李幸長. 《破週報》復刊第65期, June 25, 1999. [D](#)
17. The Lo-Sheng Sanatorium controversy began in 1994, when Taipei City Government designated the Sanatorium premise as the building site of the future Hsinchuang MRT Maintenance Station (新莊機廠). Since then, the residents and supporting students formed Lo-Sheng Preservation Self-Help Association and Lo-Sheng Youth Alliance, respectively. These two groups rallied for the Sanatorium's preservation, citing its historic significance, environmental risks posed by construction plan, and the housing rights of the elderly residents to remain in a familiar, convenient living space. After the partial demolition, these pro-preservation groups continued their efforts, and finally on December 22, 2016, after petitions outside The Control Yuan and The Executive Yuan, the National Development Council approved a proposal that would modify current construction plans to five fewer train tracks. This decision "gives grandpas and grandmas at Lo-Sheng hope of returning to their familiar homes." 吳旻娟 (Wu Min Juan), 「過去的錯誤不該延續！」樂生成功爭取重建平台 ("Mistakes from the Past Should Not Persist! Lo-Sheng Fight for Rebuild Platform a Success"), PTS News Network, December 22, 2016. Reporter's English name and the article's English title are the author's translation. [D](#)
18. Suzana Milevska, "Participatory Art: A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects," *Eurozine*, 2006, http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1761&lang=en; Rudolf Frieling, *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 12; Claire Bishop, "Claire Bishop and Boris Groys on Participatory Art," Tate Modern, May 1, 2009, <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/bring-noise>. [D](#)
19. Claire Bishop, "Introduction," in *Artificial Hell* (New York: Verso, 2012). [D](#)
20. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 79; Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*; Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79; Hal Foster, "Chat Rooms" (2004), published as "Arty Party" in *London Review of Books*, December 4, 2004, 21-22; and Suzi Gablik, "Connective Aesthetics: Art After Individualism," in *Mapping the Terrain*, 74-87; Suzanne Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art," in *Mapping the Terrain*, 171-187; and Leonie Sandercock, "The Death of Radical Planning: Radical Praxis for a Postmodern

Age," in *Cities for Citizen: Planning and the Rise of Civil Society in a Global Age*, ed.

Mike Douglass and John Friedman, (Chichester, NY: Wiley, 1998), 423–439. [D](#)

21. Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*, 15, 22. [D](#)
22. Bishop, *Artificial Hell*, 2. "Heavy metal art," public art made of metal or other industrial materials, is a term that refers to traditional art objects installed in public spaces. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 11–31; Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum*, 179–180. [D](#)
23. Foster, "Chat Rooms"; *Participation*, 190–194. [D](#)
24. Shannon Jackson, "Living Takes Many Forms," in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*, ed. Nato Thompson (New York/Cambridge: Creative Time/MIT Press, 2012), 93. [D](#)
25. In *Artificial Hell*, Bishop criticizes "the instrumentalization of participatory art as it has developed in European cultural policy in tandem with the dismantling of the welfare state." She notes that the UK under New Labor (1997–2010) "embraced this type of art as a form of soft social engineering," and mentions the critique of New Labor's encouragement of social inclusiveness in art because "it seeks to conceal social inequality, rendering it cosmetic rather than structural." Thus, participation for New Labor "referred to the elimination of disruptive individuals." Bishop, *Artificial Hell*, 5, 13. [D](#)
26. Lacy, "Introduction," in *Mapping the Terrain*, 19–48. [D](#)
27. The introduction and analysis of *Operation Little Barbarossa* and *Cooking at the Front Line* provide artworks outside the other authors' current geographic consideration. The examples in Frieling's *The Art of Participation*, Bishop's *Artificial Hell*, and Thompson's *Living as Form*, the three most recent and comprehensive examinations of participatory art, focus on the European context. [D](#)
28. Nato Thompson, ed. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (New York/Cambridge: Creative Time/MIT Press, 2012), 26–27; 249–250; 256. [D](#)
29. Quoted from the then Minister of the Interior, Chen Wei-zen (陳威仁), as reported by Alison Hsiao, "Assembly and Parade Act Scrutinized," Taipei Times. March 18, 2016. www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/03/18/2003641862. The same article stated that Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator, Cheng Li-chun (鄭麗君), re-proposed amendments to the Act after a failed final reading due to a Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) boycott. And another DPP Legislator, Lin Shu-fen, called for its abolition all together. The Assembly and Parade Act became a focus in the 2008 Wild Strawberries Movement (WSM). Active from November 6, 2008 until January 6, 2009 and as a response to this student movement argued that the Assembly and Parade Act was unconstitutional. The Movement's staff members rallied for its immediate amendment. See Yen Chia Chi, "Wild Strawberry Movement—A Milestone of Taiwan Social Movement," July 14, 2013. Personal blog, accessed December 17, 2018. <http://kateyen.weebly.com/blog/wild-strawberry-movement-a-milestone-of-taiwan-social-movement> For detailed accounts of the WSM's emergence, see the Movement's blog (in Mandarin Chinese), "Wild Strawberry Movement Action Statement" http://action1106.blogspot.com/2008/11/1106_7181.html The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of assembly, which appears in almost all democratic constitutions. And the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 12 protects people's right to "freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade

union and civic matters" (<http://fra.europa/en/charterpedia/article/12-freedom-assembly-and-association>). However, from 2012 to 2015, this democratic promise of freedom to assemble has been reversed, with Quebec, England, France, Australia, Spain, Turkey, the US passing laws to make public protests punishable. Egypt, Ukraine, and Russia have outlawed protest all together. See "Countries Around The World Are Revoking Freedom of Assembly," Al Jazeera America, May 4, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/5/countries-across-world-are-revoking-freedom-of-assembly.html> 

30. Kao Jun-Honn, ed., *act 02* (Tainan: Tainan National University of the Arts, 2010), 2. 

31. The original Chinese title for "There are Plants in the Parks; There are No Houses for Citizens" is 公園有草木, 市民沒房住. Yang Kai-wen, *act 02*, 4–5. The article accuses the government of selling state-owned lands' usage rights cheaply to financial groups, which "steal" potential public spaces for future generations. Yang, the author of the article, belongs to "Take a Good Look at Taipei, Eighteen-Month Fake Parks," a group that staged its own protests. See <https://www.facebook.com/fake.park>. 

32. /VACT sent two volunteers to investigate the incentives and commercial interests behind this policy. The volunteers surveyed ten areas that had been transformed into green spaces under the Taipei Beautiful policy. Their findings revealed that these lots, by now all owned by various firms, provided minimal public benefits, such as pedestrian passing for open space. At the same time, they had maximum potential for constructing buildings ranging from sixteen to forty-six levels. 

33. Interview with Kao, June 23, 2012. Kao explained that according to regulations, structures that lack official historic status, like the Japanese houses, can be torn down at any moment. 

34. The February 28 incident and the subsequent White Terror during Taiwan's martial law period made the questioning of governmental policies taboo. For a detailed account of Taiwan's history in cultural heritage preservation, see Lin Hui-Chun, "A General Introduction to Taiwan Cultural Heritage," *Encyclopedia of Taiwan*, Taiwan Ministry of Culture, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=723#>. 

35. Huang Jui-mao, "Fragrant Flowers or Lethal Weapon Iron Tribulus? The Sustainable Actions and Strategies Activated by the Unjustified," *act 02*, reprinted from *Taiwan Architect Magazine* (建築師雜誌), October 2010. OURs stands for The Organization of Urban R-s, a professional organization established in 1989 that focuses on urban reforms. It emerged out of the Homeless Solidarity Alliance (無住屋者團結組織) that organized earlier in the same year. According to introduction to the organization, "R-s" could stand for Re-design, Re-Plan, Re-build, Review, and Revolution. For more information on urban reform and the homeless rights movement in Taiwan, see OURs, <http://www.ours.org.tw/about>; Tsuei Ma-Ma Foundation For Housing And Community Services, http://www.tmm.org.tw/English/about_EN.htm; and Formosa, Tsuei Mama and Urban Reform Organization, "Grade Report for Ten Years of the Snails' Journey: An Interview with Homeless Solidarity Alliance Chairman Li Hisng-long," reprinted from Pots Weekly (破週報) 65, June 25, 1999, <http://bbs.nsysu.edu.tw/txtVersion/treasure/tmm/M.855789194.D/M.872869045.A/M.930843686.A.htm> 

36. Huang, "Fragrant Flowers," 13. 

37. Huang, Fragrant Flowers, 13–16. 

38. See Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," *October* 47, no. 10 (1988): 45; Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 1995), 7–8; Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban*

Futures (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 105. In the past fifteen years, aggressive government endorsed urban (re)development schemes have been rampant in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Korea. The number of ineffective “revitalizations” that disregard the environment and local residents exceed positive instances. According to Kao Jun-Honn’s research, the homelessness issue is also critical in Japan. [D](#)

39. Huang refers to primary information released by a real estate professional, providing evidence of a near 63 percent increase in housing market’s unit price (from 500,000 NT to 800,000 NT per square meter). Kao, *act 02*, 14. [D](#)
40. For more ecological and economic arguments against the Flora Exposition, see Huang, **CITATION NEEDED**, 2010. [D](#)
41. Alexander Canduci, *Triumph and Tragedy: The Rise and Fall of Rome’s Immortal Emperors* (Millers Point: Pier 9, 2010), 263. [D](#)
42. Jun-Honn Kao, 2011. “Artist Blog,” accessed September 14, 2014, <http://bcc-gov.blogspot.com/2011/10/blog-post.html>. [D](#)
43. Interview with Kao Jun-Honn, June 23, 2012. [D](#)
44. Interview with Kao Jun-Honn, June 23, 2012. [D](#)
45. Interview with Kao Jun-Honn, June 23, 2012. [D](#)
46. Although the protest action took place in Taipei, its video footage was later included in a group exhibition titled, “Bio Image” in Tainan, southern Taiwan. Chen Kai Huang, a conceptual artist and a professor at (currently President of) National Taipei University of the Arts, curated the show. [D](#)
47. Bishop, *Artificial Hell*, 6–7. [D](#)
48. “Sanying Tribe Self-Help Alliance Blog,” 2013, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://sanyingtribe.blogspot.tw/>. [D](#)
49. For an updated list of TAVUR’s activism, please refer to its official Facebook page: “TAVUR Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal 台灣都市更新受害者聯盟,” https://www.facebook.com/TAVUR.tw/?tn-str=k*Fgfg [D](#)
50. Interviews with Peng, Huang, and Chen, July 19, July 25, and September 8, 2012, respectively. [D](#)
51. 料理最前線 is the Mandarin title for *Cooking at the Front Line*. [D](#)
52. Although *Cooking at the Front Line* featured local produce, this initiative has no ties to Taiwan Rural Front, an agricultural movement. Later, some collaboration and exchange helped the two groups befriend one another. Online conversation between author and Huang Huiyu, September 23, 2018. For detailed accounts of the various site visits, food sources, and cooking methods, see the *Cooking at the Front Line* blog, February 27, March 4, April 21, and September 24 entries, <http://cooking-at-the-front-line.blogspot.com/?m=1>. [D](#)
53. None of the *Cooking at the Front Line* members had culinary training. Three had an arts background, including two art students and a full time art practitioner. Online conversation between the author and Huang Huiyu, November 9, 2018. [D](#)
54. Pikachu is a yellow pocket monster from Pokémon. Pokémon is a Japanese media franchise that includes video games, anime, and film. [D](#)
55. According to Huang Huiyi, Pussy Riot may have influenced individual members; however, Marcos was the main inspiration for the collective. Author and Huang’s online exchange, September 23, 2018. [D](#)
56. Online exchange between Huang and author, September 23, 2018. [D](#)
57. On March 14, 2014, the newspaper *Apple Daily* reported that the Wangs’ second generation land owner Wang Yao De self-demolished the temporary hut and agreed to Leyoung Construction Limited’s urban regeneration scheme. “士林王家今自拆組合屋引爆衝突,” *Apple Daily*, March 14, 2014, <https://tw.appledaily.com/new/realtime/20140314/360027/>. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Lily Wei

Lily Wei holds a PhD in Interdisciplinary Arts, with specializations in Performance Studies and the Visual Arts. She is Assistant Professor at the Center for General Education, Chung Yuan Christian University, Taiwan. Her research interests include Protest Art, Participatory Art, Public Space and Urban Art, Ecological Art, and Aboriginal Cultures.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Josef Nguyen, "How Makers and Preppers Converge in Premodern and Post-Apocalyptic Ruin," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.7>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

How Makers and Preppers Converge in Premodern and Post-Apocalyptic Ruin

Josef Nguyen

ABSTRACT This article investigates how US maker culture affirms values of self-reliance and personal responsibility through its increasing convergence with future-oriented preparation in order to construct a US maker identity differentiated from other making cultures worldwide as an ideological project of white American exceptionalism. I argue that the convergence of contemporary making with apocalyptic preparation in the US articulates making practices as vital for individual survival for apocalyptic futures as well as constructs nonwhite and non-Western geographies as simultaneously premodern and post-apocalyptic sites of ruin. US maker culture, while drawing inspiration from these geographies, suggests that such locales will be unaffected by apocalypse and, thus, cannot prepare for it. Consequently, US maker culture excludes the nonwhite inhabitants of these non-Western geographies from the idealized subjecthood rooted in the do-it-yourself (DIY) ideology and preparatory logic that maker culture endorses.

Maker culture and the maker movement broadly characterize early twenty-first-century interests in the skills and values associated with do-it-yourself (DIY) activities, mechanical tinkering, and artisanal craftwork. The popularity of making, hacking, and crafting practices in the US, for instance, manifests in the proliferation of makerspaces and Maker Faires as well as the success of online handicraft marketplaces such as Etsy.com.¹ The practices of making, hacking, and crafting are practiced globally, of course.² Although making describes varied present-day efforts worldwide, many international sites of making often construct and differentiate themselves directly in relation to the US. Claudia Costa Pederson, for example, argues that Latin American women artists working with refuse technologies reimagine dominant conceptions of making practices.³ Similarly, Silvia Lindtner examines how contemporary Chinese making activities enable and contest shifts in China's national identity and economy.⁴ She highlights, in particular, how Chinese makers negotiate persistent discourses that position China behind the US in terms of modern technological, economic, and cultural development.

While prior scholarship has examined the ways non-US sites of making and craft practices construct and differentiate themselves in relation to the US, this article instead investigates how contemporary US maker culture mobilizes non-Western geographies to distinguish itself within a global context of making. I show how contemporary maker culture constructs a US maker identity as distinct from other making cultures worldwide through the confluence of making practices and future-oriented preparation. I examine the centrality of DIY as an American ideology of craft that negotiates between communal and anti-capitalist values on the one hand and individualist and capitalist values on the other. To do so, I analyze discourses within and overlapping with American maker culture and situate them within histories of the racial politics of craft and DIY movements as anxious responses to modern industrialization in the US. I then explore how the discursive justifications in contemporary US culture for the importance of individual autonomy and responsibility through DIY practices have shifted to incorporate anxieties around disaster, apocalypse, and preparation for future survival. This growing convergence between US maker culture and widespread apocalyptic thinking, a legacy of Cold War

America, reinforces values linking moral well-being with personal responsibility, work ethic, and capitalist participation and success.

I highlight core affinities that discussions of making share with contemporary American popular media concerning survivalism and doomsday preparation through mainstream prepper culture—including magazines, television programs, and survival guides. In so doing, I discuss the rise of prepper and survivalist cultures as responses to contemporary crises in white masculinity, expressed through conservative gender politics, racism and xenophobia, and paramilitary practices. US maker culture, in its increasing incorporation of prepper logics, looks forward toward an impending apocalypse to validate individual self-reliance and personal responsibility expressed through preparation to survive disaster. Central to this convergence of maker and preparatory culture in the US is imagining nonwhite and non-Western geographies as simultaneously premodern and post-apocalyptic sites of survival, ruined locales where the skills of making have always been part of daily life, since the racialized inhabitants are believed to have never undergone modern industrialization. US maker culture, while identifying nonwhite and non-Western geographies as teeming with making, suggests that such locations, in never having become modern but already imagined as post-apocalyptic, will be unaffected by future apocalypse and, thus, cannot prepare for it. Consequently, US maker culture ultimately excludes the nonwhite inhabitants of non-Western geographies from the idealized DIY subjecthood of self-reliant makers rooted in the preparatory logic it endorses.

Crafting DIY Futures

Contemporary advocacy of making practices, hand-made crafts, and DIY attitudes continue a history of cultural responses bemoaning modern industrialization, often blamed for causing mass consumption, devalued labor, and over-reliance on technology.⁵ Discussions since the late eighteenth century have sought to address perceived socioeconomic, environmental, and moral problems attributed to industrialization by advocating returns to handicraft and manual expertise as idealized work.⁶ For example, proponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which began in late nineteenth-century England before spreading to the US, argued that a return to handicraft would enable socioeconomic reforms needed to mitigate the perceived societal degeneracy blamed on industrialization.⁷

In the early twenty-first century, similar responses to modern industrialization include Peter Korn's suggestion that the reduction of craftwork in a mass-produced world has resulted in widespread yearnings for fulfillment that its return will satisfy.⁸ Matthew Crawford, similarly, argues that "the disappearance of tools from our common education is the first step toward a wider ignorance of the world of artifacts we inhabit," coordinating the loss of handicraft in US schools with a future of technological ignorance.⁹ Within this context, Chris Anderson, former editor-in-chief of *Wired* magazine, celebrates contemporary makers—and the maker movement—as the driving force for a new industrial revolution, informed by traditions of craft and advances in computing technologies, expected to transcend the pitfalls of conventional industrial production through individual entrepreneurial practices.¹⁰

Maker culture is centrally informed by midcentury American do-it-yourself (DIY).¹¹ Use of the term "DIY" to describe individual and private leisure practices of construction, fabrication, and repair, Steve Gelber demonstrates, initially emerged in the early twentieth century before reaching widespread popularity in the US by the 1950s.¹² DIY as a practice of private and individual home maintenance largely for white suburban middle-class men advanced a model of masculinity rooted in traditions of manual labor,

"distinct from the arena of alienation that was the modern workplace."¹³ DIY aligned with key values in Cold War America, including individualism, capitalist enterprise, the significance of the home, and fear of external threats.¹⁴ For example, the US celebration of DIY abroad championed images of the individual ingenuity of the citizens of capitalist America against constructions of the racialized and uniform others engaged in mass industrial manufacture in communist China.¹⁵ Drawing on this history, I use DIY throughout this article to designate an ideology of making and crafting rooted in American individualism that values autonomy, personal responsibility, and capitalist success.¹⁶ I do not characterize all practices identified as making and crafting as rehearsing the logics that American DIY suggests in the imperative to "do it yourself"; rather, I look at the pervasiveness of DIY as an ideology that underpins the justification for making, crafting, and similar practices throughout contemporary US culture as individualistic responses to shifting sociomaterial conditions, often linking together work ethic and moral well-being.

In contrast to midcentury DIY, communal groups throughout US history—including the Oneida Community in the mid-nineteenth century and the counterculture in the 1960s—have also practiced craftwork as part of collective, rather than individualist, living in rejection of modern industrial capitalism and its perceived detrimental effects.¹⁷ This distinction, between individualist and capitalist DIY on the one hand and more communal and anti-capitalist movements on the other, is particularly visible in the transformation of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from England to the US. The American manifestation of the Arts and Crafts Movement departed significantly in ideological commitments from its anti-capitalist English origins, which were influenced primarily by socialist William Morris. As T. J. Jackson Lears demonstrates, US Arts and Crafts leaders held an "implicit acceptance of modern work conditions, combined with their individualist and idealist assumptions."¹⁸ Participants in the movement were mainly affluent white Americans who turned to Arts and Crafts ideology as an expression of class and racial anxieties, since fear of "proliferating socialists, anarchists, and immigrants energized the craft revival."¹⁹ Consequently, US Arts and Crafts enabled these affluent participants to blame particular classed and racialized subjects within capitalism as what was harming society rather than capitalism itself.²⁰ Moreover, US Arts and Crafts ideology drew heavily on moral frameworks from Puritan tradition, such as the moral value of hard work, and from perfectionism, which "sustained the delusion that social problems were entirely soluble through individual moral betterment."²¹ US Arts and Crafts ideology, which focused on individualistic work ethic and tacit acceptance of modern capitalism, provided an important foundation for the rise of DIY ideology in the US in the following century.

US maker culture represents a contemporary version of the American individualist ideology of craft that routes through the US Arts and Crafts Movement and midcentury DIY. Like these predecessors, maker culture, rather than seeking to reject it completely, imagines itself as a means to reform the problems of current industrial capitalist production. Contemporary maker culture responds partly to the decline of manufacturing labor in the US resulting from the relocation of domestic manufacturing jobs to cheaper locations such as countries in Asia and Latin America as well as the rise of computing work beginning in the twentieth century. In his 2012 book *Makers: The New Industrial Revolution*, for example, Anderson argues that "real countries make stuff," suggesting a nation's legitimacy depends on its manufacturing industries.²² Consequently, Anderson constructs a crisis in US manufacturing as congruent with a crisis in US nationhood. To position makers as the potential for a new industrial revolution, Anderson depicts China as a competing manufacturing force that the US must surpass, echoing American constructions of competition between US and Chinese manufacturing industries during

the Cold War. For example, Anderson describes the potential for makers to revolutionize contemporary production through the rise of new technologies that enable “DIY manufacturing,” such as 3D printers, by suggesting that “manufacturing companies in the United States and Europe are increasingly able to compete with low-cost labor in China.”²³ These comments implicitly locate makers, maker culture, and the ingenuity that Anderson associates with them in the US and in Europe, excluding China and other racialized geographies of low-cost labor as part of his imagined maker-led industrial revolution. DIY as an ideology of craft and American individualism also reinforces white American exceptionalism constructed against foreign nations such as China.

Criticisms of industrial production often deploy nostalgia for a fantasy of premodern, preindustrial artisanal life in response to social ills attributed to shifting material and labor arrangements. Nostalgia, Svetlana Boym argues, shapes the direction of the future despite its appearance as backward-looking in its longing for an imagined past.²⁴ Many of the historic criticisms of modern industrialization, including from maker culture, frame a return to handicraft as necessary to preempt undesirable futures. According to Ben Anderson, preemption, as one kind of logic of intervention, seeks to prevent the arrival of potential futures by eliminating their anticipated causes in the present.²⁵ The Arts and Crafts Movement, the US counterculture, and much of contemporary US maker culture, for example, have characterized the skills of handicraft as the necessary means for avoiding continued social degeneracy, rampant consumerism, and an innovation-starved citizenry respectively. They suggest that these future consequences result from increasing industrial production, defamiliarization with material labor, and overreliance on computing technologies, which must be avoided through increasing crafting activities at large. Regarding contemporary US making, for instance, Chris Anderson suggests the need to preempt the continued decline and devaluing of industrial manufacturing in the US: “we have to reverse that path—not by returning to the giant factories of old, with their armies of employees, but by creating a new kind of manufacturing economy” that can defeat China’s.²⁶ Rather than return to a previous past through nostalgia for handicraft, however, Anderson mobilizes nostalgia for handicraft to imagine a new future through collective participation in making in order to reverse China’s industrial dominance.

While making is imagined as the collective engine for a US-based industrial revolution that preempts increasing industrial domination by China, it is also imagined as individual preparation. In addition to preemption, Ben Anderson notes that preparation offers another kind of anticipatory logic, one that braces for an undesirable future and acts to mitigate its expected consequences rather than attempting to circumvent its arrival.²⁷ In asserting why adults must train children in making skills, for example, maker culture figurehead Tim O'Reilly writes, “One of the best pieces of advice I ever received when my kids were young was this: ‘Your job as a parent is to prepare your children for their future.’ For their future, not the one that you grew into—that’s their past.”²⁸ O'Reilly further explains that the unknown details of the future should direct parents to raise their children to acquire making practices, framed as versatile expertise for diverse future conditions. For makers, making describes practices that not only can preempt futures but are necessary practices that prepare for unknown futures.

This incorporation of preparatory logic also reveals contemporary making’s operation as both a collective project for intervening in the arrival of undesirable futures and also as an individual project for self-preservation, negotiating both the collectivist trajectories in the history of craft as well as the individualist manifestations aligned with DIY ideology. The column titled “MakeShift” in the maker culture magazine *Make* (2005–present), for instance, places readers into various emergency, survival, and apocalyptic scenarios to underscore the broad utility of making: building a water filter, surviving a zombie

infestation, and weathering through nuclear winter.²⁹ These disaster scenarios challenge readers to propose solutions for how to respond based on materials at hand. In one particular scenario, readers are tasked with evacuating their wife and children after an earthquake sets off impending rock slides and floods toward their mountain home. A moral dilemma inserted into the scenario involves whether to save “your only neighbor, a single guy named Dave, [who] probably partied hard last night and slept through the quake. But his house will flood just as quickly as yours. [...] In a disaster like this, [is it] every man for himself?”³⁰ The scenario constructs whether to aid this irresponsible neighbor—depicted as unprepared and a burden—as a question of personal responsibility and self-preservation in the face of disaster; tenuous ties to others interfere with protecting one’s own self and family. Making under DIY ideology is imagined only to secure one’s own survival in the face of future catastrophe when collective welfare is in question.

Makers and Preppers

Arguments advocating making skills as preparation for surviving disasters highlight both the preparatory logics that lurk among contemporary maker culture and its increasing convergence with US prepper culture through shared commitments to self-reliance and individual responsibility to do it yourself. Prepper culture, Casey Ryan Kelly shows, operates primarily through performances of masculinity rooted in physicality, manual and mechanical labor, weapons training, and other paramilitary practices.³¹ Previously viewed as extremist activities, private planning, training, and hoarding for disaster and doomsday scenarios have become mainstream entertainment in the US, what Gwendolyn Audrey Foster characterizes as “apocotainment.”³² From the commercial sale of survival guides and the popularity of reality shows such as *Doomsday Preppers* (2012–2014) to the popular *Fallout* video game franchise (1997–2018), contemporary US culture is fascinated by the world ending.

The intersection of maker culture and prepper culture joins nostalgia for craft as responses to changing socioeconomic conditions with Cold War ideology. Foster explicitly traces contemporary prepper culture back to the “paranoia and lack of empathy” central to the Cold War.³³ The logics informing Cold War preparation practices—such as safety drills and supply hoarding in the face of potential Soviet threats of nuclear destruction—persist in contemporary US anticipatory politics.³⁴ Joseph Masco, for instance, demonstrates that the current US counterterror state invested in domestic security inherits the logics of Cold War fear and response.³⁵

Anxieties about the threat of foreigners undergirded domestic Cold War culture. Michael Curtin, for example, examines the rise of television documentaries during the midcentury that featured Cold War tensions between Western capitalist countries and their Eastern communist enemies. Such television programming constructed “the otherness of Communist societies [as] so profound that the programs are pessimistic regarding possibilities for accommodation between East and West,” racializing communist nations like China as wholly alien and threatening.³⁶ While watching these documentaries in their homes, US citizens were also charged to build, though rarely executed, home fallout shelters, which were part of “an ideologically charged national do-it-yourself project that permeated America’s post-war consciousness.”³⁷ Defense from foreign enemies became a DIY project, since “citizens were responsible for their own safety. Americans adopted a framework for security based on self-defense bolstered by private enterprise, rather than on cooperative democratic efforts to ease international and domestic tensions.”³⁸

Alongside Cold War expectations of individualistic preparation and defense against foreign threats, the perception of white masculinity as under attack also shapes the

emergence of contemporary prepper culture. Contemporary white male supremacy frames attacks on white masculinity as also attacks on the US itself, conceived as a nation of and for white men, since, as Sally Robinson suggests, “an enduring image of the disenfranchised white man has become a symbol for the decline of the American way.”³⁹ Such challenges to the dominance of normative white men since the midcentury include advancements in civil rights, women’s rights, and queer rights resulting in an increasingly multicultural America; the establishment of affirmative action; immigration from Central America and Asia; and the relocation and outsourcing of jobs from the US to other nations.⁴⁰ Moreover, the rise of contemporary paramilitary culture emerged to reestablish claims to masculinity perceived as lost through the nation’s defeat to racialized communist enemies in the Vietnam War.⁴¹ The centrality of violence and weaponry to prepper culture rehearses this fantasy of masculinity offered by paramilitary practices, since, following James William Gibson, “American men—lacking confidence in the government and the economy, troubled by the changing relations between the sexes, uncertain of their identity or their future—began to *dream*, to fantasize about the powers and features of another kind of man who could retake and reorder the world. And the hero of all these dreams was the paramilitary warrior.”⁴² This fantasy of reclaimed masculinity, however, relies on war metaphors that position white men as defending themselves, their families, and the nation from often racialized and foreign threats, both internal and external.

This fantasy of defending white masculinity under attack includes belief that “the whole modern world was damned as unacceptable.”⁴³ Such a view suggests the desire for the modern world’s destruction, which situates paramilitary culture and prepper culture both within contemporary survivalism, an ideology framing contemporary daily life as precarious and hostile. Philip Lamy describes survivalism as “not interested in reforming the system; the collapse is imminent. However, it does offer a plan of action, a kind of ‘redemption’ or ‘salvation,’ in the manner of surviving the great destruction of the current order and the living on to build a new one.”⁴⁴ Survivalism is particularly prevalent in right-wing and conservative groups that view white and normatively heterosexual masculinity as under attack by the world at large. Survivalism as a form of millenarian thinking anticipates the collapse of the current world order with aspirations to start anew. As Lamy continues, “survivalism becomes part of salvation, which, in the early months or years of the Apocalypse, means disaster preparation.”⁴⁵ To be able to reap the benefits of the apocalypse, the disintegration of the unacceptable world that has challenged the authority of white masculinity, one must prepare to survive the apocalypse.

A significant body of scholarship has examined apocalyptic and catastrophic narratives.⁴⁶ Foster, for example, characterizes the US as an “apocalyptic obsessed culture,” while James Berger identifies “a pervasive post-apocalyptic sensibility in recent American culture.”⁴⁷ While analysis of contemporary US culture and its obsession with future destruction ranges in the use of the terms “apocalypse” and “post-apocalypse,” the prevalence of preparatory logics across American culture and the popularity of apocalypticism demonstrate a widespread interest in future calamity. For my purposes, apocalyptic thought describes concern with causes of the catastrophic end, ways to preempt it, and moral judgments made upon those who fare through it. In his study of narrative finality, for instance, Frank Kermode argues that apocalypses function to frame history, particularly through revelations, which links conceptions of catastrophe with earlier religious literatures.⁴⁸ Consequently, apocalypse, Elizabeth K. Rosen suggests, enacts social critique by identifying responsibility for the end and for evaluating how different subjects will weather, successfully or not, through calamity.⁴⁹ Many of the craft movements responding to modern industrialization, such as the Arts and Crafts Movement and US counterculture, for example, were driven by apocalyptic thought in

attempting to preempt undesirable futures. By practicing craft to preempt the dystopian future ahead, such responses frame undesirable futures as punishment for social failings attributed to industrialization.

In contrast to apocalypse's focus on the final disaster, I conceptualize post-apocalyptic thought as concerned with the quotidian details of the aftermath, representing a shift toward how the conditions of apocalypse become everyday.⁵⁰ Stephen Joyce, for instance, contends that post-apocalypse only becomes legible to a broad audience following World War II, when nuclear destruction becomes widely feared alongside the recognition of the possibility of living in the world destroyed by catastrophe.⁵¹ Berger argues that in spite of the end of the world, "something is left over, and that world after the world, the *post-apocalypse*, is usually the true object of the apocalyptic writer's concern."⁵² Contemporary prepper culture, for instance, envisions future catastrophe as the imminent corrective that will identify and reward self-reliant individuals fit to continue to live in its wake.

Whereas the culture of Cold War preparation approached surviving the apocalypse with dread, contemporary survivalism, including prepper culture, anticipates the apocalypse with optimism for moral validation of its preparatory lifestyle. For prepper culture, apocalypse provides the moral litmus test for validating self-reliance, since the apocalypse does not rapture the chosen away but is instead expected to cleanse the world of the unworthy like that imagined through the Great Deluge. A central principle of the American Preppers Network, for instance, contends that "prepper families who learn to live independently will find themselves prospering greatly—in ways that may not be apparent to the enslaved masses of society."⁵³ While post-apocalypse typically concerns the excluded and remaindered, this statement from the American Preppers Network constructs the prepper community as the included and chosen through apocalyptic thought—the responsibly self-reliant special elect in contrast to the "enslaved masses" who will succumb to disaster. Rather than working to preempt the future collectively, one is responsible for preparing oneself for its arrival, to "do it yourself" to avoid apocalyptic punishment.

In addition to imagining global apocalypse, preppers also frame personal-scale events as sites of potential disaster to render survival preparation as a moral and individual responsibility of daily life.⁵⁴ Attempting to dispel perceptions that preppers are simply doomsday fanatics, for example, the American Preppers Network declares, "We firmly believe that every American family should strive to become Self-Reliant, enabling them to better weather the day-to-day disasters, catastrophes and hardships that we all experience."⁵⁵ In describing catastrophe to include "the death of an immediate family member, an all consuming [sic] house fire, debilitating sickness or injury or a sudden devastating financial change such as losing a job," the American Preppers Network constructs apocalypse as, ultimately, any test of self-reliance, demanding preparation as a core responsibility of daily living.⁵⁶

This conception of catastrophe as inherently everyday suggests a model of post-apocalyptic thinking that exchanges the grand catastrophe ahead for crises constitutive of everyday life. Frederick Buell shows how a similar domestication of catastrophe has transformed US environmental crisis discourse in recent decades. He asserts that "no longer an apocalypse ahead, critical environmental problems and constraints help construct society's sense of daily normality."⁵⁷ Buell describes this form of post-apocalyptic thought, living amid ubiquitous disaster, as a form of slow apocalypse.⁵⁸ Under survivalism, which has framed the world that challenges the dominance of white male supremacy as both unacceptable and on the brink of collapse, US prepper culture

advocates the importance of individual preparation as a moral responsibility by treating daily life as inherently catastrophic.

Educating Prepared Subjects

US apocotainment and the American Preppers Network website represent examples of disaster preparedness pedagogies, what John Preston describes as materials and practices influencing how individuals respond to prospective disaster.⁵⁹ Disaster preparedness pedagogies come in a range of media—including television broadcasts, magazine articles, and survival guides—outlining conditions of disaster, subjects at risk, and prescriptions for preparation. Additionally, the exercises, scenarios, and drills that participants undergo to practice for potential futures also serve as disaster preparedness pedagogies. Much of the scholarship on contemporary anticipatory action centers on government processes, programs, and efforts that educate residents to respond to crisis in state-sanctioned ways.⁶⁰ For Preston, these constitute official preparedness pedagogies, which originate from government authorities.⁶¹ In contrast, folk preparedness pedagogies derive from non-state agents who prescribe best practices for emergencies.

US prepper culture, with its distrust of governmental authority, relies primarily on sources of folk preparedness pedagogies.⁶² Because individual responsibility for survival is a central value of many US preparatory cultures, disaster preparedness pedagogies commonly reinforce DIY attitudes toward preparation.⁶³ These resources constitute construction kit preparedness pedagogies, which “[are] to be interpreted and acted on by the individual in the event of a crisis [...] to aid citizens in constructing their own shelters and equipment for survival.”⁶⁴ Construction kit preparedness pedagogies, in their DIY sensibilities, require that practitioners possess competencies needed to follow and deviate from instructions as necessary themselves.

Disaster preparedness pedagogies, beyond communicating skills or strategies to practitioners, frame how to perceive threats to one's security. Consequently, disaster preparedness pedagogies within contemporary US survivalist and prepper cultures reinforce disaster preparedness as individual responsibilities for one's self and one's family, paranoia regarding competition among other preppers and hostile outsiders, and ideologies of white male supremacy. The proliferation of zombie-themed media, for instance—as represented by the massive popularity of the *The Walking Dead* cross-media franchise that includes comics, television, and video games (2003–present)—rehearse ways of seeing racialized, historically black, subjects figured through the zombie as threatening the survival of imperiled whiteness.⁶⁵ As Steven Pokornowski suggests, the pervasiveness of zombie media depicts and justifies violence against racialized bodies through discourses of self-defense within the context of contemporary US racial tensions and state-sanctioned police violence.⁶⁶

The reality television program *Doomsday Preppers* performs similar pedagogical work not only by discussing principles of prepping but also by normalizing prepper subjectivities. Beginning in the second season, the show's prepping consultancy, the company Practical Preppers, provides grades for each featured prepper, or set of preppers, and their preparations for their respective vision of civilization's end, whether the result of climate change, economic collapse, or geomagnetic reversal. The grading of preppers, the justification of grades, and the recommendations offered to improve preparations function pedagogically as the show outlines standardized principles for preparedness. Congruent with the DIY framework of construction kit preparedness pedagogies, *Doomsday Preppers* provides rationale for specific actions in preparation, for both general and particular disasters. By watching the show, viewers acquire guidelines,

instructions, and attitudes that encourage them to become preppers themselves, adapting what they learn from the show to their own concerns regarding future calamity.

In addition, the grading of preppers on the show treats prepping as a legitimate activity and reinforces the framing of preppers as ordinary people, which enables viewers of *Doomsday Preppers* to identify more readily with those who participate in historically fringe practices.⁶⁷ Regarding the construction of white heterosexual masculinity presented throughout *Doomsday Preppers*, Kelly argues that “what is novel about this current iteration of apocalyptic manhood is that it has been translated into a form of entertainment media that is constructed to communicate authenticity.”⁶⁸ As participants on a reality show, these profiled preppers possess what Laura Grindstaff describes as ordinary celebrity, “the incorporation of ordinary people into the celebrity framework” that foregrounds constructions of their relatability.⁶⁹ This framing of authenticity and ordinariness affords substitution through identification by viewers with those featured on reality television, which encourages viewers to inhabit the subject position of the preppers depicted. *Doomsday Preppers* as folk disaster preparedness pedagogy validates not only prepping practices but also prepping subjectivities.

A similar pedagogical function operates through survival-oriented reality shows, such as *Survivor* (US series, 2000–present).⁷⁰ While not explicitly post-apocalyptic in premise, *Survivor* and similar shows offer survival skills as entertainment, gesturing toward the survivalists who prepare for future catastrophe. *Survivor* is a competitive reality show where participants must withstand the difficulties of living in a remote location without being provided food and shelter while also navigating the cutthroat politics involved with voting competitors off until only one remains victorious. *Survivor* and other survival-oriented reality television in the US, such as *Naked and Afraid* (2013–present), explore the self-reliant capacities of US subjects for surviving without modern conveniences. Moreover, such shows dramatize tensions between selves and others, whether a dozen fellow castaways in *Survivor* or one’s single partner in *Naked and Afraid*. Consequently, *Survivor* and other survival-oriented reality television programs simulate and reinforce for participants and viewers a world demanding individual self-preservation—to do it yourself—to overcome successfully environmental precarity as well as burdensome, and likely untrustworthy, social ties.

Reality television shows such as *Survivor* and *Naked and Afraid*, which rely on identification fostered by ordinary celebrity, function as a kind of exercise in survival skills for viewers. In examining Cold War preparation, Tracy C. Davis explores how exercises as “trials of skills by those learning the ropes” are rooted in the theatrical tradition of rehearsals.⁷¹ Because the participants of such shows possess ordinary celebrity, viewers are encouraged to not only learn from the participants’ actions but also to speculate on their own strategies were they to be in similar situations themselves as a vicarious exercise or speculative rehearsal—either on a future season or in an apocalyptic future. *Doomsday Preppers*, *Survivor*, and other popular apocotainment media make disaster preparedness mainstream by serving as folk disaster preparedness pedagogies for individual viewers to rehearse and prepare for catastrophic futures themselves, while emphasizing competition, individual responsibility, and extreme distrust of others.

Ruining Time and Space

Disaster preparedness pedagogies enable viewers, participants, and consumers to make the future present by allowing them to construct an unrealized future and act in advance of its arrival. Whether calculating the future through statistical predictions, imagining the future through narrative representations, or performing the future through role-playing exercises, the future can be made present in many ways.⁷² The reality television show *The*

Colony (2009–2010), for example, presents a post-apocalyptic future to document how groups of US participants in each of its two seasons fare in exercises set during fictional global epidemics. Faced with limited resources and other challenges imposed by the show, the participants of *The Colony* rehearse survival in staged urban settings as tests of preparation for post-apocalyptic life.

The geographies represented in these post-apocalyptic futures show that disaster preparedness pedagogies shape not only how to see and prepare for disasters but also how time and space are imagined unevenly through the identification of past disasters, their ramifications, and future disaster potentials. For instance, the two seasons of *The Colony* were filmed at the edges of downtown Los Angeles and outside of New Orleans, as settings to explore how US life might endure after apocalypse. The first season of *The Colony* echoed twentieth- and twenty-first-century fascination with imagining Los Angeles as the epicenter of apocalyptic ruin, while the latter season drew on perceptions of New Orleans as a large-scale failure of preparation and response, particularly governmental, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.⁷³

The US cultural imaginary conceives both Los Angeles and New Orleans as modern urban ruins, present-day sites of Western civilization's decay. This allows them to function as ready-made geographies for rehearsing the post-apocalypse. As Ann Laura Stoler notes, "*Ruin* is both the claim about the state of a thing and a process affecting it."⁷⁴ To conceive of Los Angeles and New Orleans as ruins, as wreckage, requires conceiving of them as ruined, subjected to processes that have wrecked them—whether by natural disaster, military force, or neglect of care. Stoler elaborates that "ruins are made, but not just by anyone, anytime, anywhere."⁷⁵ Certain things, geographies, and bodies are viewable as ruins; they not only have undergone processes that ruined them but also processes that allow specific subjects to perceive them as ruined.⁷⁶ For Los Angeles, New Orleans, and other large American cities imagined as sites of disaster and destruction, their perception as already in decline, as presently potentially post-apocalyptic, results from the history of white flight beginning in the mid-twentieth century, as white middle-class families—motivated partly by racist and xenophobic anxieties—relocated from urban centers to suburban communities, drawing away economic and political resources along with them.⁷⁷

Disaster preparedness pedagogies construct conceptions of time, such as past, present, and future, unevenly across space through their conceptions of catastrophe and ruin. *The Colony* presents one framework for viewing ruin in its rehearsal of post-apocalyptic life through urban environments steeped in the cultural imagination of disaster by marking the contemporary geographies of Los Angeles and New Orleans as previews of post-apocalyptic futures to come. Following Christopher Dole et al., such constructions of catastrophe often articulate contours for defining modernity.⁷⁸ Los Angeles and New Orleans, subsequently, operate as anachronistic spaces to make the post-apocalyptic future present, ruins of modernity contemporaneous with modernity itself.

Shows like *Survivor*, in contrast, suggest an alternate form of anachronistic ruin found within contemporary preparatory cultures. As Jennifer Bowering Delisle argues, *Survivor* constructs its geographic settings as left behind or outside the temporal rhythms of modern development.⁷⁹ Delisle quotes promotional material from the fourth season of *Survivor*, for example, which describes that participants must "relearn the most basic skills: how to find and prepare food, how to build shelter, and how to maintain their health under difficult circumstances" by themselves.⁸⁰ As Delisle comments, this description implies that the participants "must relearn these skills not because they knew them earlier in life, but because humankind knew them at an earlier point in history."⁸¹ To task *Survivor* contestants with needing to "relearn the most basic skills" underscores how the

show's participants stand in for the rest of the US, and modernity, and suggests that their ability to survive reflects the capacity for modern US subjects who have collectively "forgotten" these skills to survive on their own.

This interest in contemporary US subjects "relearning" what are characterized as basic, primitive, or premodern survival skills reinforces existing hierarchies of modern development that position Western nations, largely denoting white European and North American countries, as superior geographies to those imagined as part of the Global South, such as countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁸² *Survivor* and similar shows suggest that remembering what are considered fundamental and historic skills requires spaces available in the present that are seen as anachronistic settings from the past. These shows largely frame the locales of their staged survival exercises in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America as primitive, exotic, and undeveloped settings compared to the modern Western geographies from where the participants hail. In the US *Survivor*'s production history, for instance, none of its first thirty-seven seasons, up through the fall of 2018, were filmed in locations in Europe or north of Latin America. Such imagination of nonwhite, non-Western geographies as premodern and, thus, suggested to be inferior to modern white European and North American countries draws on histories of colonial domination and exploitation as well as scientific racism predicated on constructions of race and racial hierarchy.⁸³

Consequently, US prepper and maker cultures view racialized geographies unlike the white West as temporally anomalous, anachronistic spaces lingering or intruding into the modern present. *Make* magazine's column "Heirloom Technology," for example, looks largely to various nonwhite and non-Western cultures to "[find] the technology of the future from the forgotten ideas of the past."⁸⁴ While some articles discuss figures and technologies associated with modernity, including the Wright Brothers and audio headphones, "Heirloom Technology" articles consistently fetishize constructions of ancient wisdom attributed to non-Western geographies such as Kenya, Guatemala, and Indonesia. Like the premise of *Survivor*, the column's title of "Heirloom Technology" invokes construction of premodern knowledges that require recovering—knowledges believed to be forgotten or ignored by Western modernity but require remembering and relearning—through exposure to these premodern spaces. This emphasis on age, contrasted with associating modernity with newness, for instance, is particularly pronounced in a feature on irrigation techniques from the "ancient Aztecs" as well as another on boat design in contemporary China, which is described as "the oldest civilization."⁸⁵

Contemporary US preparatory cultures, including maker culture, largely frame modernity as an undesired period of social and technological dependence against a premodern history of idealized self-reliance. Despite the wide range of theorizations of the sociomaterial conditions that modernity comes to signify, modernity as a concept organizes time and space in particular ways.⁸⁶ Across modernity's many theorizations, as Walter Benjamin asserts, common narratives that describe it as a fissure from premodernity rely on linear models of time.⁸⁷ Drawing on Benjamin, Shannon Lee Dawdy emphasizes that modernity operates as an ideology of time and history, which treats the conditions of modernity, however defined, as congruent with the normative present historic period of the entire world.⁸⁸ Consequently, US preparatory cultures construct anachronistic geographies as locales that are seen as demanding self-reliance and autonomy either because the locale has fallen behind modernity, as with nonwhite, non-Western geographies seen as premodern, or because the place has encountered modernity's failures prematurely, as with urban centers following white flight viewed as post-apocalyptic.

Survivor and similar programming conflate geographies imagined as premodern with geographies imagined as post-apocalyptic. This equivalence constructs DIY attitudes and knowledges as individual responsibilities for survival in contrast to the widespread dependence that modernity is believed to foster. For survivalists preparing for future apocalypse, such geographies become sites for making the future present, framing geographies simultaneously as premodern past and post-apocalyptic future. By “relearning” the skills necessary to survive in the post-apocalypse in contemporary locales such as Guatemala, Kenya, and Samoa, which the show constructs as premodern, *Survivor* as disaster preparedness pedagogy renders premodernity and post-apocalypse as functionally equivalent.

These non-Western geographies and their nonwhite inhabitants are already ruined by their exclusion from what is considered modernity in order to be made present as post-apocalyptic ruins. Because non-Western geographies are constructed as both premodern past and post-apocalyptic future, contemporary US preppers also treat these locales as resources for preparatory insights and appropriation. For instance, in a 2013 themed issue of *Lucky Peach* magazine (2011–2017), the US food publication featured the apocalypse as the inspiration to underscore cooking as both a craft and a fundamental survival skill.⁸⁹ Joining articles on foraging, pickling, and canning, a contribution by Kris Yenbamroong finds inspiration in contemporary Thailand for post-apocalyptic preparation.⁹⁰ Yenbamroong writes, “Much of Thailand already cooks from something akin to an apocalyptic pantry,” echoing other preparatory constructions of non-Western geographies as anachronistically post-apocalyptic in their perceived premodern state.⁹¹ Moreover, Yenbamroong’s comment suggests that future disaster may have little effect on daily life in Thailand, since it is already imagined to be surviving daily conditions similar to the apocalypse.

Though this prepper model of history bemoans the social and technological dependence associated with industrial modernization, it also requires such a construction of dependency in order to exalt DIY preparatory practices in the face of modernity’s potential collapse. Preppers optimistically anticipate the arrival of apocalypse to cleanse those they see as morally irresponsible from the world and validate their own capacities to fulfill individual responsibilities of survival.⁹² For prepper culture’s normative moral order, prepping is constructed as a personal choice within geographies that are seen as modern and developed but not yet ruined, where preparation becomes necessary and legible as individual responsibility for surviving future calamity.

Prepper culture suggest that ruins are geographies that demand autonomy, self-reliance, and personal responsibility. But ruins, as Lewis Gordon notes, are “the remains of a human project that [has] ceased.”⁹³ With respect to constructions of premodern ruins, US prepper culture suggests that contemporary Thailand, Guatemala, and China have ceased in the human project of modernity. As anachronistic geographies, they are also temporally stagnant locales. The nonwhite inhabitants of these non-Western geographies do not receive the same moral recognition as responsibly prepared or prepped individuals in the US, even if they are celebrated for their fluency in making and craft, since prepping and its corresponding moral validation require future-thinking and impending apocalypse. For preppers, apocalypse will judge favorably those who have “forgotten” but “relearned” fundamental survival skills in preparation for its arrival while punishing modern subjects who do not. Consequently, the inhabitants of non-Western geographies are not seen as prepping as they are already imagined to be in the midst of immediate survival; they would be unaffected by modernity’s collapse having not experienced modernity themselves. Within the white American prepper moral order, non-Western geographies both have no past, as they are seen as the past, and also have no future toward which to

prepare, as they have always been functionally post-apocalyptic through exclusion from Western constructions of modern development.

Conclusion

The sectors of contemporary US maker culture converging with survivalism and doomsday prepping argue that the skills of making and crafting are necessary today for preparing for future apocalypse. Under DIY's moral logics, subjects are individually responsible for acquiring making skills to survive in the present and in the future. Consequently, the apocalypse as a future demanding self-sufficiency and autonomy frames the acquisition of the skills imagined to be necessary as a moral responsibility now for one's own well-being.

While makers in geographies such as China, Guatemala, and Kenya may see making practices as opportunities to fashion themselves—individually and collectively—in similarity to and in distinction from the US, the convergence of maker discourses with prepper and survivalist discourses in the US frames such geographies, in their nonwhite and non-Western construction, as already ruined to make premodernity and post-apocalypse present in them. The broad range of popular preparatory and apocalyptic media that functions as disaster preparedness pedagogies in the US—from *Doomsday Preppers* to the American Preppers Network website—teaches participants, viewers, and consumers to see time and space through frameworks of potential disasters. Through efforts to make the post-apocalypse present in what are framed as premodern geographies outside the West, these disaster preparedness pedagogies construct the nonwhite geographies of Latin America, Asia, and Africa as anachronistic spaces in modernity that require autonomy and individual responsibility, enabling them to serve as testbeds and resources for preppers and survivalists.

Viewing China, for instance, as both nostalgically premodern and anticipatorily ruined, however, suggests an expectation that China will not be affected by the apocalypse for which makers and preppers are preparing. Apocalypse is constructed only as a test for modern space and time, for white Europe and North America, because non-Western geographies are conceived as premodern environments that are already surviving post-apocalyptic conditions. Moreover, as China and other nonwhite and non-Western geographies are imagined to be excluded from the judgments of apocalypse, their inhabitants, too, are excluded from recognition as ideal preparatory and DIY subjects, since they are constructed as incapable of prepping. To take seriously making as a contemporary worldwide phenomenon, we must both attend to its many localized and varied manifestations globally as well as ruin how white US maker culture—as it functions as the ideological center of much of the global imagination of making and increasingly converges with prepper discourses and subsequent racist and xenophobic politics—operationalizes, commodifies, and excludes such geographies.

Notes

1. Daniela K. Rosner, "Making Citizens, Reassembling Devices: On Gender and the Development of Contemporary Public Sites of Repair in Northern California," *Public Culture* 26, no. 1 (2014); Austin Toombs, Shaowen Bardzell, and Jeffrey Bardzell, "Becoming Makers: Hackerspace Member Habits, Values, and Identities," *Journal of Peer Production* 5 (2014); Sarah R. Davies, "Characterizing Hacking: Mundane Engagement in US Hacker and Makerspaces," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* (2017). 
2. Denisa Kera, "Hackerspaces and DIYbio in Asia: Connecting Science and Community with Open Data, Kits and Protocols," *Journal of Peer Production* 2 (2012); Matt

Ratto and Megan Boler, eds., *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014); Lilly Irani, "Hackathons and the Making of Entrepreneurial Citizenship," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 40, no. 5 (2015).



3. Claudia Costa Pederson, "Situating Making in Contemporary Latin American Feminist Art," *Journal of Peer Production* 8 (2016).
4. Silvia Lindtner, "Hacking with Chinese Characteristics: The Promises of the Maker Movement against China's Manufacturing Culture," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 40, no. 5 (2015).
5. For example, see Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Nina MacLaughlin, *Hammer Head: The Making of a Carpenter* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015).
6. George McKay, ed. *DIY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (London: Verso, 1998); Faythe Levine and Cortney Heimerl, *Handmade Nation: The Rise of DIY, Art, Craft, and Design* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); Amy Spencer, *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture* (London: Marion Boyars Publishing, 2008); Betsy Greer, *Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014).
7. Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
8. Peter Korn, *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2013).
9. Matthew B. Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 1.
10. Chris Anderson, *Makers: The New Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012).
11. Sara Tocchetti, "DIYbiologists as 'Makers' of Personal Biologies: How Make Magazine and Maker Faires Contribute in Constituting Biology as a Personal Technology," *Journal of Peer Production* 2 (2012).
12. Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
13. Gelber, *Hobbies*, 294.
14. Elaine Tyler May, "Security against Democracy: The Legacy of the Cold War at Home," *The Journal of American History* 97, no. 4 (2011): 956.
15. Gelber, *Hobbies*, 281.
16. For more on individualism, see Daniel Shanahan, *Toward a Genealogy of Individualism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).
17. Philip Lamy, *Millennium Rage: Survivalists, White Supremacists, and the Doomsday Prophecy* (New York: Plenum, 1996); Rochelle Smith, "Antislick to Postslick: DIY Books and Youth Culture Then and Now," *The Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 3 (2010); Cathy Smith, "Handymen, Hippies and Healing: Social Transformation through the DIY Movement (1940s to 1970s) in North America," *Architectural Histories* 2, no. 1 (2014); Daniela K. Rosner and Fred Turner, "Theaters of Alternative Industry: Hobbyist Repair Collectives and the Legacy of the 1960s American Counterculture," in *Design Thinking Research: Building Innovators*, ed. Hasso Plattner, Christoph Meinel, and Larry Leifer (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015).
18. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 83–84.
19. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 70–71.

20. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 84. [D](#)
21. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 72. [D](#)
22. Anderson, *Makers*, 23. [D](#)
23. Anderson, *Makers*, 31. [D](#)
24. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv. [D](#)
25. Ben Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 6 (2010): 789–90. [D](#)
26. Anderson, *Makers*, 24. [D](#)
27. Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness," 790–91. Additionally, Anderson identifies precaution as a third anticipatory logic that intervenes in processes in the present that have potentially catastrophic outcomes by adjudicating between the possibility of threat and the potential costs of acting against that threat. [D](#)
28. Tim O'Reilly, "News from the Future," *Make*, May 2005, 13. [D](#)
29. William Lidwell, "MakeShift," *Make*, May 2005; Lee D. Zlotoff, "MakeShift: Zombie Attack!, *Make*, February 2011; "MakeShift: Hot Water," *Make*, August 2011. For more on *Make* magazine, see Susan Currie Sivek, "'We Need a Showing of All Hands': Technological Utopianism in Make Magazine," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (2011); Tocchetti, "DIYbiologists as 'Makers' of Personal Biologies"; Josef Nguyen, "Make Magazine and the Social Reproduction of DIY Science and Technology," *Cultural Politics* 12, no. 2 (2016). [D](#)
30. Lee D. Zlotoff, "MakeShift: Flood Panic," *Make*, May 2006. [D](#)
31. Casey Ryan Kelly, "The Man-Pocalypse: *Doomsday Preppers* and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 36, no. 2–3 (2016): 98. See also Allison Kabel and Catherine Chmidling, "Disaster Prepper: Health, Identity, and American Survivalist Culture," *Human Organization* 73, no. 3 (2014). [D](#)
32. Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2. [D](#)
33. Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*, 27. [D](#)
34. Tracy C. Davis, "Between History and Event: Rehearsing Nuclear War Survival," *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 4 (2002); Andrew Lakoff, "Preparing for the Next Emergency," *Public Culture* 19, no. 2 (2007); Peter Adey and Ben Anderson, "Anticipating Emergencies: Technologies of Preparedness and the Matter of Security," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 2 (2012); John Preston, *Disaster Education: "Race", Equity and Pedagogy* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012). [D](#)
35. Joseph Masco, *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 15. [D](#)
36. Michael Curtin, *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 58. See also Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* (New York: NYU Press, 2013). For Cold War racialization of Asians and Asian-Americans, see Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). [D](#)
37. Sarah A. Lichtman, "Do-It-Yourself Security: Safety, Gender, and the Home Fallout Shelter in Cold War America," *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 1 (2006): 39. [D](#)

38. May, "Security against Democracy," 941. 
39. Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 2. 
40. James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); Lamy, *Millennium Rage*; Abby L. Ferber, "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors: The Construction of Masculinity in Mythopoetic and White Supremacist Discourse," *Men and Masculinities* 3, no. 1 (2000); Soraya Murray, *On Video Games: The Visual Politics of Race, Gender and Space* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018). 
41. Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989); Gibson, *Warrior Dreams*. 
42. Gibson, *Warrior Dreams*, 11, emphasis in original. 
43. Gibson, *Warrior Dreams*, 12. 
44. Lamy, *Millennium Rage*, vii. For Lamy, survivalism as ideology is related to but more capacious than survivalist practices, such as wilderness training. 
45. Lamy, *Millennium Rage*, 5. 
46. Lee Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005); Teresa Heffernan, *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Peter Y. Paik, *From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (New York: Verso Books, 2011); Joseph Masco, "The End of Ends," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2012); Christopher Dole et al., eds., *The Time of Catastrophe: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Age of Catastrophe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015); Anthony Aveni, *Apocalyptic Anxiety: Religion, Science, and America's Obsession with the End of the World* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2016); Rebekah Sheldon, *The Child to Come: Life after the Human Catastrophe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). 
47. James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xiii; Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*, 2. 
48. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93–95. 
49. Elizabeth K. Rosen, *Apocalyptic Transformation: Apocalypse and the Postmodern Imagination* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), xii. 
50. Briohny Doyle, "The Postapocalyptic Imagination," *Thesis Eleven* 131, no. 1 (2015). 
51. Stephen Joyce, *Transmedia Storytelling and the Apocalypse* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 4. 
52. Berger, *After the End*, 6, emphasis in original. 
53. Phil Burns, "The Five Principles of Preparedness," American Preppers Network, <http://americanpreppersnetwork.com/what-is-a-prepper/the-five-principles-of-preparedness>. 
54. Michael F. Mills, "Preparing for the Unknown . . . Unknowns: 'Doomsday' Prepping and Disaster Risk Anxiety in the United States," *Journal of Risk Research* (2018): 2.

55. "About the American Preppers Network," American Preppers Network, <http://americanpreppersnetwork.com/about-the-american-preppers-network>. 
56. "About the American Preppers Network." 
57. Frederick Buell, *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xviii. 
58. Buell, *From Apocalypse to Way of Life*, 95. 
59. Preston, *Disaster Education*, 3. 
60. Tracy C. Davis, *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Melanie Armstrong, "Rehearsing for the Plague: Citizens, Security, and Simulation," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 42, no. 1 (2012); Vivian Y. Choi, "Anticipatory States: Tsunami, War, and Insecurity in Sri Lanka," *Cultural Anthropology* 30, no. 2 (2015). 
61. Preston, *Disaster Education*, 6. 
62. Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*, 15. 
63. Lichtman, "Do-It-Yourself Security." 
64. Preston, *Disaster Education*, 4. 
65. Katherine Sugg, "The Walking Dead: Late Liberalism and Masculine Subjection in Apocalypse Fictions," *Journal of American Studies* 49, no. 4 (2015); Eric King Watts, "Postracial Fantasies, Blackness, and Zombies," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14, no. 4 (2017); Murray, *On Video Games*. 
66. Steven Pokornowski, "Vulnerable Life: Zombies, Global Biopolitics, and the Reproduction of Structural Violence," *Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2016): 16. 
67. Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*, 26. 
68. Kelly, "The Man-Pocalypse," 99. 
69. Laura Grindstaff, "Just Be Yourself—Only More So: Ordinary Celebrity in the Era of Self-Service Television," in *The Politics of Reality Television: Global Perspectives*, ed. Marwan Kraidy and Katherine Sender (New York: Routledge, 2011), 45. 
70. For *Survivor* and similar reality shows, see Keat Murray, "Surviving *Survivor*: Reading Mark Burnett's *Field Guide* and De-Naturalizing Social Darwinism as Entertainment," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24, no. 3-4 (2001); Lamont Lindstrom, "Survivor Vanuatu: Myths of Matriarchy Revisited," *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 1 (2007); An Kuppens and Jelle Mast, "Ticket to the Tribes: Culture Shock and the "Exotic" in Intercultural Reality Television," *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 7 (2012). 
71. Davis, "Between History and Event," 16. 
72. Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness," 783-86. 
73. For Los Angeles and disaster, see Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (New York: Verso, 1997); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); Jared Orsi, *Hazardous Metropolis: Flooding and Urban Ecology in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004). For New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina, and disaster, see Brent Yarnal, "Vulnerability and All That Jazz: Addressing Vulnerability in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina," *Technology in Society* 29, no. 2 (2007); Cedric Johnson, *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Vincanne Adams, *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the*

Wake of Katrina (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Patina: A Profane Archaeology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). [D](#)

74. Ann Laura Stoler, "The Rot Remains": From Ruin to Ruination," in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 11, emphasis in original. [D](#)
75. Stoler, "The Rot Remains," 21. [D](#)
76. Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (New York: Rodopi, 2004); Joseph Masco, "Survival Is Your Business": Engineering Ruins and Affect in Nuclear America," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008); Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Gastón R. Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). [D](#)
77. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2003); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006). [D](#)
78. Christopher Dole et al., "When Is Catastrophe?: An Introduction," in *The Time of Catastrophe: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Age of Catastrophe*, ed. Christopher Dole, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 4. [D](#)
79. Jennifer Bowering Delisle, "Surviving American Cultural Imperialism: Survivor and Traditions of Nineteenth-Century Colonial Fiction," *The Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 1 (2003): 44. [D](#)
80. Delisle, "Surviving American Cultural Imperialism," 44. [D](#)
81. Delisle, "Surviving American Cultural Imperialism," 44. [D](#)
82. For more on cultural hierarchies constructed through conceptions of modern development, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). [D](#)
83. James T. Campbell, Matthew Pratt Guterl, and Robert G. Lee, eds., *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Lee D. Baker, *Anthropology and the Racial Politics of Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). [D](#)
84. Tim Anderson, "Heirloom Technology: Finding the Technology of the Future in the Forgotten Ideas of the Past," *Make*, February 2005, 38. [D](#)
85. Tim Anderson, "Chinampa Gardens," *Make*, April 2011, 168; Tim Anderson, "Chinese Ingenuity," *Make*, November 2005, 38. [D](#)
86. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). For theorizations of modernity, see Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Malden, MA: Polity, 1990); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1993); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). For theorizations of modernity through theorizations of postmodernity, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992). [D](#)

87. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 261. [D](#)
88. Shannon Lee Dawdy, "Clockpunk Anthropology and the Ruins of Modernity," *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 6 (2010). [D](#)
89. Peter Meehan, "Note from the Editor: The Apocalypse Issue," *Lucky Peach*, February 2013. [D](#)
90. Kris Yembamroong, "Jellyfish: The Only Seafood Left," *Lucky Peach*, February 2013. [D](#)
91. Yembamroong, "Jellyfish," 135. [D](#)
92. Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, "Consuming the Apocalypse, Marketing Bunker Materiality," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 33, no. 4 (2016). [D](#)
93. Lewis R. Gordon, "Disaster, Ruin, and Permanent Catastrophe," in *The Time of Catastrophe: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Age of Catastrophe*, ed. Christopher Dole, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 133. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Josef Nguyen

Josef Nguyen is an assistant professor in the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at The University of Texas at Dallas. He is working on a book project exploring contemporary debates surrounding youth, digital media, and creative labor. He is also interested in maker and DIY cultures, technologies of play, and the politics of consent. His work appears in *Configurations*, *Cultural Politics*, and *Transformative Works and Cultures*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Ned Randolph, "License to Extract: How Louisiana's Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast is Sinking It," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.8>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Randy Martin Prize Winner

License to Extract: How Louisiana's Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast is Sinking It

Ned Randolph

ABSTRACT This article explores the deployment of Louisiana's highly touted \$50 billion, fifty-year Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, which is often characterized as saving Louisiana's Working Coast of disappearing marshlands that are home to several major industry sectors, along with migratory flyways, seafood estuaries, and two million residents. As a concept, the Working Coast attempts to signify the importance of Louisiana's coastal zone to the nation's economy in order to justify expensive restoration projects. By complicating the euphemism and the extractive logic it signifies, I hope to show that the state's current approach to slow the disappearance of its coastline in fact rationalizes the very practices sinking it. The Working Coast reifies the state's fragile marshlands through metrics that can only be realized through continued extraction.

Introduction

The French-speaking Native American tribe Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, located about fifty miles southeast of New Orleans, made international news in 2016 when it was named the recipient of a \$48 million US Housing and Urban Development grant to abandon Isle de Jean Charles, a disappearing isthmus that the tribe has lived on for 170 years. In the last half century, the land had withered from 22,000 acres to just over 300 acres. The remaining strip is surrounded by a small tidal ring levee and patches of grass dramatically converting to open water. The village is reachable by the two-lane Island Road from the Pointe aux Chenes village at the end of an obscure bayou by the same name. The access road is often submerged during storms and high tides. Isle de Jean Charles is "teetering at land's edge" like many Native American communities in Louisiana historically pushed by European settlers into the swamps and wetlands of the southern coast.¹ In 1998, Jean Charles was removed from a revised design of the highly anticipated "Morganza-to-the-Gulf" regional levee system that is now being built.² An Army Corps of Engineers cost benefit analysis determined it was too expensive to extend the new levee. The seventy tribal members instead won a relocation grant in Congress's Superstorm Sandy Appropriations package, earning the moniker of the first US climate refugees.³ There is little doubt that sea-level rise will engulf the last stitch of Isle de Jean Charles, but its current fate as well as the loss of two thousand square miles of Louisiana marshland since 1930 are caused not by climate change but instead its predecessor: the production of Louisiana's "Working Coast." In short, the state's economic practices are sinking it.

About a third of Louisiana's geography—including New Orleans—consists of what's called alluvial delta. It was built over the last 7,500 years by the Mississippi River, which fanned across a muddy shelf of its own making, dropping silt as it meandered "like a pianist playing with one hand—frequently and radically changing course."⁴ For the last 300 years, engineers and politicians have wrestled control over the river through levees, jetties, dredging, and other measures to prevent flooding, "reclaim" adjacent swampland for

agriculture, and provide reliable deep-water shipping into the continental interior.⁵ This effort to hold the river within a single channel has shackled its ability to meander and replenish its coastal delta. Today, its sediment of mud, silt, and farmland runoff is jettisoned into the Gulf of Mexico, which has left the adjacent marshes vulnerable to other human-induced stressors, particularly intensive oil and gas drilling, canal dredging, and invasive species such as Nutria and Asian scale bugs. Together, these ingredients have concocted an existential crisis for Louisiana. Rates of localized subsidence and erosion fluctuate based on activity, but the US Geological Survey estimates that the state loses forty-five square miles of coastline a year. Sea-level rise will exponentially accelerate this retreat, leaving New Orleans increasingly vulnerable, while also drowning the working-class hamlets, state-recognized indigenous communities, and fishing villages that help comprise South Louisiana's unique Creole and Cajun culture.⁶

The Louisiana government, which presumably needs to deploy every scientific and social tool at its disposal to mitigate the upheaval of environmental and human geography, has organized its strategy for restoration around a \$50 billion, fifty-year *Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast*. The plan has the backing of a coalition of high profile environmentalists and industrial interests. Still only partially funded, the eleven-year-old plan frames the state's coastal wetlands as a national asset whose wetland estuaries and infrastructure supports 90 percent of the oil and gas from the Outer Continental Shelf, a quarter of the nation's petrochemicals, over 25 percent of the nation's seafood catch, 20 percent of the nation's waterborne shipping (by weight) through its five major ports, and millions of migratory birds.⁷ The Master Plan was first passed by the Louisiana Legislature in late 2006, shortly after hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated 220 square miles of marshlands. Catalyzed by what I call the *Katrina Effect*, which led to the bureaucratic reorganization of coastal governance, the Master Plan folds the Louisiana's eighty-year problem of coastal disappearance into an emergent strategy of hurricane protection, catalyzed by Katrina. The restoration strategy includes a multi-pronged approach: pumping dredged mud and sediment into marshes and onto barrier islands off the coast; securing shorelines with shoal barriers; heightening seawalls and ring levees around populated areas; and elevating homes. But its most ambitious proposal includes diversion spillways along the Mississippi River to "pulse" sediment back into the delta. The first two of ten such projects have been approved by Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for an estimated \$2 billion.⁸

The diversions would provide a dedicated source of mud to the delta by its original progenitor, which is captured in discourses by state supported-scientists, coastal planners, and some environmentalists of returning the Mighty Mississippi to its "natural" role of land building.⁹ Authors of the Master Plan say they are using "the best available science and engineering to prioritize and sequence projects for implementation."¹⁰ But in adjudicating decisions about where and how to divvy up a limited supply of sediment, money and other resources to protect populated areas and what authors call "critical infrastructures," the Master Plan is also deeply political. Supporters frame it as the protector of Louisiana's coastal culture and industries as well as an instrument for economic diversification for struggling coastal communities. These "political rationalities" appeal to a broad cross section of stakeholders, who may otherwise be in opposition.¹¹ The plan also traffics in *extractive thinking*. It establishes in essence a future for the state's people and economy through the conditions created by the practices it supports. This paper explicates some of the ways that the state's power structure rationalizes fossil fuel production and other extractive practices for its restoration agenda, which also has implications for the physical safety of two million coastal residents. The "Working Coast" speaks to the historically extractive nature of Louisiana's industries and their deleterious effects on the environment through a neoliberal valuation of the landscape. It

commodifies nature in order to justify its preservation. While environmental crisis and even climate change are often framed through scientific discourses as technical problems, conversations in cultural studies help us think through environmental collapse as a manifestation of structural social inequality.

Katrina Effect

The story of Katrina has been well told by better scholars. But the 2005 storm's legacy on Louisiana's governance today simply cannot be discounted. The winds and tidal surges of Hurricane Katrina and fellow Category-3 Hurricane Rita, which struck the western side of the state three weeks later, not only deluged the city of New Orleans but uprooted more than 220 square miles of coastal wetlands in its track. Industrial ports and processing facilities were drowned. Major pipelines were severed. Storm recovery efforts would require a reorganization of water and flood management, and a plan to restore the beleaguered marshes. State and city leaders pitched their recovery by framing the region as a national asset with strategic importance. They leveraged Louisiana's five deep water ports that reach the nation's interior markets. They leveraged the state's seafood estuaries. And they leveraged a massive oil and gas pipeline infrastructure.¹² By disrupting the Louisiana coast, the storm disrupted the economy, causing fuel price spikes and shipping delays of grain and other goods to world markets.¹³

The pitch worked. The federal government not only approved a new \$14.5 billion levee protection system around Metropolitan New Orleans, completed in 2010, but it recognized Louisiana coastal restoration as an essential buffer for storm protection. The storm also unleashed a series of reforms addressing "pre-existing social problems" that had little to do with hurricane protection, but they help illustrate how the levers of power can hide behind environmental destruction.¹⁴ Power after all is maintained by logics that seem commonsensical and rarely questioned. "Call it the silver lining," wrote the Aspen Institute's Walter Isaacson, a native New Orleanian who was appointed by then-governor Kathleen Blanco to help lead recovery efforts. "Hurricane Katrina washed away what was one of the nation's worst school systems and opened the path for energetic reformers who want to make New Orleans a laboratory of new ideas for urban schools."¹⁵ An assortment of think tanks joined reformers and newspaper editorial boards around the country to frame the catastrophe as an opportunity. Republican State Judge Joe Cannizaro called it a "clean sheet" to create a "smaller safer city." Republican Congressman Richard Baker noted in a speech to lobbyists, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."¹⁶ A state educational recovery board after Katrina took over New Orleans poorly performing public schools and brought them under a charter system. And all nine of the infamous public housing projects were torn down, substantially reducing the number of affordable units. The city began redeveloping mixed-income housing on the same footprint, offering housing vouchers to nineteen thousand of its poorest households, whose reimbursement rates have remained stagnant as rents have increased 6 to 8 percent per year. According to the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, the majority of renters spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing—nearly two out of every five renters—which far exceeds the national average. Four out of five low-income "cost-burdened renters" in New Orleans are African American households.¹⁷

Author Naomi Klein in her book *Shock Doctrine* describes moves to privatize and marketize public services as a form of post-shock opportunism that allows for "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities."¹⁸ If anything Hurricane Katrina provided a visual narrative of historic geographic and racial inequality in New Orleans, which continues to persist today. An examination of flood maps show that

Katrina rendered the heaviest damage to lower-lying African American neighborhoods. Of course, it wasn't God that flooded them; the flooding was the result of racial economic and geographic inequality through drainage politics and historic segregation. In the earliest days of New Orleans, most settlement followed the Mississippi's snaking embankment along the highest alluvial ridge, which was easily overtaken by seasonal floods and storms. Levee construction and drainage ditches directed water to the lower-lying swamplands "back-of-town" towards Lake Pontchartrain, which was described as a thin "gruel" of water and organic matter that shrank and settled when drained.¹⁹ Before 1900, the city's black population typically occupied these swampy portions.²⁰ Urban expansion away from the river required the lowlands to be "reclaimed" from the swamps. This demanded drainage infrastructure, which in turn allowed further expansion. The Drainage Commission of New Orleans formed in 1896 undertook an ambitious Progressive Era citywide drainage program of pumping stations and canals. Louisiana State University scholar Craig Colten points out that the coinciding Jim Crow policies challenged emerging Progressive principles of social equity by prohibiting the movement of African Americans and denying services to non-white neighborhoods. The constraints of Jim Crow meant that even when black New Orleanians received drainage and sewerage services by the 1930s, they were limited to the lowest sections of the city.²¹

Most of the city's rear cypress swampland was subdivided between 1900 and 1920, triggering a real estate boom and 700 percent increase in the city's urban acreage. Additional lowland lots were developed after World War I, and the remaining balance was built out following World War II between 1946 and 1975. In fits and starts, the practice of draining swamplands for neighborhood development continued through the late 1980s, which also opened neighboring parishes to white flight suburbanites fleeing school desegregation. That in effect left the city with a growing proportion of poorer African Americans.²² The drainage system was so successful in removing water from the soil that it opened up air cavities, which in turn allowed organic matter to decompose, shrink, and create more cavities.²³ The Crescent City, so named for the wide crescent-like bend in the Mississippi River, had been transformed into a fortified bowl surrounded by water. Its edges were ringed by levees. Internal ridges that were built by old river meander paths prior to the levees, like Esplanade and Metairie ridges, sat a bit higher near sea level and were home to affluent neighborhoods. The city's working-class neighborhoods, the majority of them African American, sat in the lowest area of elevation that flooded in heavy rain—in essence at the bottom of the bowl.²⁴ Pumps originally located behind populated areas—but which now found themselves surrounded by them—expelled runoff into the lake through outfall canals that increasingly rose above the subsiding neighborhoods. "Unbeknownst to new residents, their exposure to hazard grew with every centimeter their neighborhoods sank, as did their dependence on pumps and barriers to prevent rainwater or sea water from pouring in."²⁵ This perpetuated a cycle of ground water removal and vulnerability, so that by the time Katrina struck in 2005, half of New Orleans sat below the level of the sea "by one, two, three, up to five meters."²⁶ The city's twenty-four colossal drainage stations had the pumping capacity to empty a 13.5-foot deep, ten-square mile lake every twenty-four hours through the same urban canals that channeled Katrina floodwaters into the heart of the city, a devastating dialectic of urban ecology.²⁷

By the end of the morning of August 28, there were nearly fifty separate breaches to the regional levee system. The worst hit neighborhoods lay in New Orleans East, flooded through a controversial shipping canal built by the US Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s. Known colloquially as MR-GO, the seventy-six-mile Mississippi River Gulf Outlet cut through the wetlands for smaller vessels seeking to avoid the yawning turns of the Mississippi. But MR-GO required regular dredging and was long criticized by

environmentalists for its aggressive erosion. Katrina floodwaters surged through MR-GO through the back door of New Orleans, and T-boned into the Industrial Canal at the Lower Ninth Ward levee, a working class African American neighborhood, where income averaged \$16,000 a year.²⁸ “It would be the Lower Ninth Ward—a mixed-race community before school desegregation, but ninety-eight percent black at the time of Katrina—that stood as a synecdoche for anyone debating the rebuilding question” after the storm.²⁹

The social and environmental degradation caused by Katrina (and later Rita), led to a reorganization of Louisiana governance. In the fall of 2005, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco created the bi-partisan Louisiana Recovery Authority to direct post-storm recovery efforts, which more than doubled congressional appropriations for Louisiana to \$28 billion.³⁰ The byzantine levee board system was consolidated into regional districts with required expertise in flood protection.³¹ That November, the Louisiana Legislature created the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) to reorganize and oversee all of the state’s ad-hoc coastal activities. The CPRA became a critical player in securing federal funds in housing, environmental support, transportation and marine and flood protection. Its first task was drafting a comprehensive plan to address coastal erosion and flood protection. That Master Plan was approved by the state legislature in late 2006. It was called a working document with an “adaptive management framework” to be updated every five years, later changed to six.³²

Conditions of Possibility

The resulting Master Plan, instead of moving away from *extractive thinking*, allows for the continued historic practices that led to the conditions it was created under and which guarantee its future necessity. The plan to sustain Louisiana’s Working Coast is inextricably tied to Louisiana’s coastal industries through its funding mechanisms, political rationalities that organize its logic, and political ecologies that render the region more vulnerable. Its largest source of recurring revenue comes from royalty collections on oil and gas platforms in federal waters. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act passed by Congress in the wake of Katrina provides up to \$170 million annually.³³ In 2006, Louisiana voters constitutionally dedicated GOMESA revenues to Louisiana’s Coastal Protection and Restoration Trust Fund for the sole purposes of “integrated coastal protection”—which includes coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and improvement of infrastructure directly impacted by coastal wetland loss (such as pipelines).³⁴ Tying oil royalties to mitigate damage caused to the coast on its surface may seem appropriate. The inverse of that logic is also true: it turns the restoration authority into advocates for an industry that has shredded the state’s wetlands and increased the danger of sea-level rise.³⁵ For example, in October 2017 coastal officials announced that restoration projects would have to be scaled back due to falling global petroleum prices, which reduced the state’s royalty check from the federal government. In response, the governor’s coastal adviser Chip Kline said there was reason to be hopeful because Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke was about to announce the largest offshore oil and gas lease sale in history: seventy-seven million acres in the Gulf of Mexico. He said, “Zinke was here in Louisiana a couple of weeks ago, and he promised to help us move some of our much-needed coastal projects forward. He gets it.”³⁶ More drilling will place more pressure on pipeline routes through the marsh and add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

The plan also relies on revenues from a legal settlement to Gulf Coast states impacted by the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon well disaster that killed eleven people and poured 210 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico.³⁷ Louisiana will receive up to \$5 billion over fifteen years through the RESTORE Act (Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunity, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2011), which

Mark Davis, the director of Tulane's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, called analogous to "paying for a gym membership by winning pie-eating contests."³⁸

The Master Plan creates the conditions for its own possibility in other ways. It funds ring levees that protect coastal communities from flooding in the short term but disrupt the hydrological "sheeting" of sedimentation that maintains healthy estuaries. Levees not only entrap water after storms, but they encourage development in flood plains. Communities surrounded by levees are dependent on electric drainage pumps to remove floodwaters. Ultimately this cycle of water removal dehydrates organic soils and causes land within levee systems to sink. In coastal Louisiana, communities protected by levees have dipped as much as ten feet below sea level, which then leaves them more vulnerable and imminently harmed by catastrophic flooding.³⁹ Ecologically speaking, the vulnerability of these social geographies is reinforced by their protection, which requires subsequent intervention.

We can also look to the plan's governing logic that operates through what scholar Wendy Brown calls "political rationality."⁴⁰ In addition to restoring the coastline and protecting the oil industry, advocates for the plan tout its ancillary economic benefits in the form of a "water jobs cluster" that can be exported to other areas afflicted by sea-level rise and environmental decline. They frame the Master Plan as an investment vehicle that will diversify the state's economy. The 2012 Master Plan update cites various studies that tout positive returns on workforce investment in water management, including a study by the LSU/Louisiana Workforce Commission claiming that \$618 million spent in 2010 by the state on coastal restoration created nearly 9,000 direct and indirect jobs and \$1.1 billion in sales and a study by Duke University that argued coastal restoration spurs investments and jobs in shipbuilding, equipment repair, and manufacturing—as long as the state maintains a steady investment to entice private sector investments. The CPRA claims that investing in coastal restoration provides other long-lasting benefits to local economies, such as higher property values, better water quality, sustainable fisheries, and increases in tourism dollars. These arguments provide the political rationality for the Master Plan itself.⁴¹

Windfalls of federal and state money are also changing the institutional landscape. Tulane University in New Orleans recently opened a "water campus," called the Center of Academic Excellence for Research and Partnerships, to capture CPRA grant funding and foster collaboration among coastal researchers.⁴² The new campus is also partnering with the entrepreneurial community that sprouted up post-Katrina, such as the technology business incubator Propeller, which sponsors award contests and business challenges for "water entrepreneurs."⁴³ The state of Louisiana in January 2018 opened a water campus in Baton Rouge to house the CPRA and its research arm, the Water Institute of the Gulf, which awards contracts to universities and other third party researchers, and carries out its own environmental studies for CPRA projects. The Water Campus includes other tenants carrying out CPRA design, research, and land-building efforts. The sleek thirty-five-acre campus opened to press and fanfare touting that its presence will bolster a blighted area adjacent to downtown Baton Rouge and help elevate the city's business climate.⁴⁴ The campus is promoted through glossy brochures featuring shared workspaces overlooking along the Mississippi River.

Recently, stakeholders have been attempting to entice more private investors into the restoration game through financial incentives. A new kind of environmental performance bond has been proposed by the Environmental Defense Fund that would attract financial organizations to bond CPRA projects against future revenues, allowing the state to implement projects earlier, and reward contractors with a financial bonus for building projects that exceed the scope of performance of the project.⁴⁵

Political rationality brings together disparate interests under a governing form of reason, which once it takes hold, promotes the interests of that logic. Brown argues that political rationality gives impetus to political actions, regimes, and everyday practices (or even violence) that are outside of the intentionality of the participants. They are not necessarily attributable to ideology or material conditions. “Political rationality is not an instrument of governmental practice, but rather the condition of possibility and legitimacy of its instruments, the field of normative reason from which governing is forged.” The Master Plan has become the normative form of reason for the benefits and opportunities it provides.⁴⁶ It helps explain how seemingly incompatible schemes—and players—can join forces and serve to provide legitimacy to its logic.⁴⁷

For example, the Master Plan also enjoys the support of the powerful shipping lobby because it discursively and materially maintains the “Mighty Mississippi River” as a principle engine of commerce.⁴⁸ It rationalizes dredging the Mississippi River channel for in order to pump “mud slurry” into endangered marshes. In August, the Army Corps of Engineers agreed to deepen the Mississippi River channel by fifty feet to the celebration of shipping interests such as the Big River Coalition, whose membership includes an assortment of port operators, petrochemical refineries, and shipping companies that advocate using dredged material for marsh restoration.⁴⁹ Port officials have been asking for a deeper channel to attract the larger Panamax ships coming through the new Panama Canal deep lock. The Panama project, opened in 2016 and linked to massive deforestation and environmental displacement in that country, has set off a proverbial arms race among US ports.⁵⁰ As southern port facilities expanded to receive bigger ships than had previously sailed around the tip of South America, Louisiana officials clamored for the Army Corps of Engineers to deepen the Mississippi River to keep its ports competitive. Louisiana Republican Congressman Garret Graves, the former CPRA executive director and now on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said the channel deepening project could qualify as a coastal restoration project, allowing restoration money to cover Louisiana’s local match with the Corps.⁵¹

Through this reliance on and rationalization for extractive practices, the plan is both an antidote and product of the same *extractive thinking* that calls forth its existence. It produces the way out of a crisis by continuing the conditions of possibility that caused it. For instance, the CPRA is spending billions of public dollars to protect Louisiana’s extractive coastal industries even as recent geological surveys suggest that the rate of sea-level rise is twice that estimated in the 2012 Master Plan update. It may overtake the ability of the planned diversions to rebuild land.⁵² State officials admit the publicly-funded interventions will not restore the entire “boot” of Louisiana or many of the vulnerable communities along the coast. Therefore, one might wonder what are the interventions sustaining? It seems clear that they are sustaining the industrial activity and assets that make the coast a viable site of investment for continued intervention.⁵³ They are sustaining a rationale for intervention.

The Governing Logic

The governing logic of the Master Plan and the “Working Coast” reproduces the ongoing dialectic of depending on a diminishing landscape for one’s livelihood, which further diminishes the landscape. If the wetland estuaries continue to transform into open water, the state’s robust seafood industry will collapse. One could argue that oil and gas development and other heavy industry is actively transforming a landscape into one that can only support those industries. This dialectic “metabolism” that has transformed the coast into capitalist production has consumed the very milieu onto which this production

has taken place.⁵⁴ New political rationalities and discourses of economic diversification for hard hit parishes help further justify investments in the Master Plan.

As an instrument of restoration, the Master Plan could be thought of as an extraction machine. It fails to call for reduction in oil and gas production that has left more than ten thousand miles of canals open to salt water intrusion and “ponding” effects that have been associated with a third of all wetland losses.⁵⁵ It contains no projects to backfill oil and gas canals, which have been identified as a “low tech” solution and embraced by previous restoration plans.⁵⁶ Leaving canals untouched satisfies oil interests as well as the faction of few but powerful private landowners whose access canals and wells either produce steady royalty checks or may again in the future with newer drilling technology or increased market prices.⁵⁷ An estimated 80 percent of coastal land in Louisiana is privately held, most of it by a handful of large landowners residing outside of Louisiana. Conoco, for example, owns seven hundred thousand acres.⁵⁸ Randy Moertle, who represents a consortium of six south Louisiana landowners that collectively own 185 thousand acres and sit on several stakeholder coalition boards, including America’s Wetland and Ducks Unlimited, said that backfilling canals is extremely unpopular among them.⁵⁹ Backfilling is also unpopular with fisherman, said Jim Tripp with the Environmental Defense Fund, who characterized backfilling canals as “robbing Peter to pay Paul” because the sediment would have to come from somewhere. The lack of sediment is an ongoing constraint cited by coastal planners. Even river sediment—if directed into the marsh—contains about half the volume it once did because of urban hard scape development throughout the Mississippi River Basin.

Backfilling canals also is too individualized to be considered as part of the large scale systemwide approach the Master Plan takes, according to Denise Reed, one of the plan’s authors.⁶⁰ Creating a backfill program would require a large mobilization effort to directly siphon mud to small amounts of material to different places, she said. Meanwhile, Mark Davis, one of the early coastal restoration advocates, says that the longer backfilling is neglected, the less sediment is available for it. When the state was first considering backfilling in the 1980s, the “spoil bank” ridges of mud cuttings along the side of canals could have been pushed back into the water channel and prevented subsequent saltwater intrusion and provided platforms for vegetative growth. Those solutions were actively fought by the oil and gas lobby, and many were screened out of the 2012 Master Plan update. Today many of the banks themselves have compacted into the eroding conditions they helped cause through hydrological disruption.⁶¹ Their neglect has been productive for political interests that resist them.

As an extraction machine, the Master Plan also fails to build upon findings by US Geological Surveys on subsidence “hot spots” in the marsh that correlate to periods of rapid removal of oil crude that may have been caused by either depressurized well cavities beneath the surface or from deep well brine that may have triggered subterranean fault activity.⁶² There is no public discussion by coastal planners to re-pressurize old wells with fluid to halt subsidence as is required in California and other places.⁶³ Instead the Master Plan focuses on implementing system wide projects like diversions—which have been met with resistance by many coastal communities whose residents rely on the brackish estuaries for seafood harvesting, oyster farming, and fishing. Diversions are called by opponents unpredictable, slow, and expensive. Two pilot diversion projects created in the 1990s by the Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program or “Breaux Act” have produced mixed results.⁶⁴ Public forums held by the CPRA in coastal communities are often punctuated with heated discussions and acrimony, resulting in what Craig Colten calls a “democratic deficit.”⁶⁵ Fishermen and oyster farmers argue that diversions will decrease salinity and destroy the harvests and fishing grounds

vital to coastal livelihoods and dismantle living oyster reefs that act as wave breaks. Beyond that, some communities in the path of diversions will be forced to move because of increased water levels.⁶⁶ Others are concerned about pollutants from the Mississippi River. While there is evidence supporting the efficacy of marshes to filter municipal effluence, for instance,⁶⁷ it is unclear if Louisiana's degraded marshes can filter the what's flowing down the Mississippi River—referred to in Mark Twain's time as the "Great Sewer."⁶⁸ Currently, farm pesticide and nutrient runoff at the river's mouth generates a hypoxic "dead zone" of algae whose plume rivals the size of New Jersey and consumes enough oxygen to suffocate marine life.⁶⁹ In a recent example of resistance, the local government of Plaquemines Parish tried to withhold permission for the state to take soil samples for its \$1.4 billion diversion structure that could send as much as seventy-five thousand cubic feet per second of sediment-laden freshwater from the Mississippi into brackish Barataria Bay. In response, the state threatened to withhold other restoration projects until the local government complies with its requests.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, there exist a contingent of researchers who argue that building sediment diversions without addressing the thousands of miles of oil and gas pipeline canals throughout the coast may actually increase subsidence.⁷¹ It leaves one speculating that research questions outside of acceptable political parameters of supporting the "Working Coast" have been effectively sidelined.

Science versus Ideology

As an individual case, Louisiana reflects the larger social and environmental impact of twenty-first century energy policy. It has fostered a plan that deploys science for coastal restoration efforts that ends up rationalizing the state's petro-economy. It relies on commonsense that participates in an existing global logic that is reproduced through international oil and gas production networks where oil companies either extract without hindrance⁷² or engage in what Toby Miller describes as a "social license to operate" purchased by other goodwill offsets.⁷³ This "Greenwashing Effect" is particularly insidious in Louisiana as both one of the nation's largest producers of fossil fuels and singularly vulnerable to sea-level rise caused by greenhouse gases. Louisiana's coast constitutes 40 percent of the US coastal marshes and 80 percent of its losses.⁷⁴ Greenwashing allows corporations to act as good stewards even though their primary concern is extracting profit for shareholders at minimal costs. In greenwashing campaigns, corporations routinely describe themselves as citizens, while principally pursuing economic interests, argues Miller. "Their restless quest for profit unfettered by regulation is twinned with a desire for moral legitimacy and free advertising—based on "doing right" in a very public way, while growing rich in a very private one."⁷⁵

I recently attended a meeting of America's WETLAND coalition, comprised of high profile environmentalists, landowners, and restoration planners, at Nicholls State University, fifty miles southeast of New Orleans at the steps of Terrebonne Parish's receding coast. The meeting was sponsored by the international mining and petroleum company BHP (formerly BHP Billiton). A spokeswoman for the Australian-based multinational corporation said they intended to operate in the Gulf of Mexico for decades to come. "Part of who we are is sustainability and partnering. We want to make sure that we are part of a stewardship to leave things in a better position than when we arrived."⁷⁶ In February 2017, BHP invested \$2.2 billion into the new "Thunder Horse" water injection platform owned by BP, which marked BP's first project in the Gulf of Mexico since its 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil disaster, which is still the largest marine oil spill on record.⁷⁷ At the WETLAND meeting, Rachel Archer, who is BHP's general manager for Gulf of Mexico operations, stressed their commitment to social responsibility. "We need to be able to demonstrate we are responsible, be good stewards."⁷⁸ She pointed to the company's

international presence as a point of its stewardship. “We are global mining, and petroleum –beneficiaries of these resources all over world. That comes with a social responsibility.” BHP is currently embroiled in multiple class action lawsuits totaling tens of billions of dollars for its role in the 2015 Mariana mining disaster that is called the worst environmental disaster in Brazil’s history. The collapse of the massive Fundão dam unleashed nearly 16 billion gallons of iron ore waste and triggered a toxic mud slide that killed nineteen people, destroying three towns and contaminated 280 miles of river across two states.⁷⁹ BHP was also fined \$25 million by the US Securities and Exchange Commission in 2015 related to its “hospitality program” at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing that provided 176 government- and state-owned-enterprise officials an all-expenses-paid package to attend the Games. The SEC found the company violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act by inviting officials from at least four countries where BHP had interests in influencing the officials’ decisions.⁸⁰

It’s challenging to be a good local steward when the profit centers and headquarters of companies are thousands of miles away, says Mark Davis. Louisiana is full of “middle managers.” Under the current legal architecture, oil producing landowners are simply incentivized to turn areas into what Julie Maldonado calls “Sacrifice Zones.” In sacrifice zones, human lives are valued less than the natural resources extracted from a place.⁸¹ Such extraction activity generates shareholder profits and state tax revenues. Rapid resource extraction that denudes the surrounding area makes those within the sacrifice zone increasingly vulnerable and marginalized, causing further economic or physical displacement. Maldonado points to the displacement of Isle de Jean Charles as a result of social and economic inequality—resulting from a lineage of decisions and values that privileged corporate interests and distant shareholders over local users who depend upon local resources.

In sacrifice zones, the levers of power are hidden by seemingly natural or ecological disasters such as hurricanes, oil spills, and other hazards that are worsened from poor regulatory oversight, improper compensation, and cultural disregard to certain communities already living on the margins. Examples abound in Louisiana of environmental injustice for poor communities that lack political, legal, or educational capital to fight harmful projects that further marginalize them. Consider the plight of poor residents in western St. James Parish, set between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, on an eighty-five-mile stretch of Mississippi River that hosts a cluster of petrochemical plants known not so affectionately as “cancer alley.”

The St. James Parish Council split 5-4 in August 2017 to allow the state-permitted Bayou Bridge Pipeline project by Energy Transfers Partners, owners of the Dakota Keystone pipeline, to acquire land needed to reach its destination in the petrochemical cluster on the west side of the river. The \$670 million project would funnel 480 thousand gallons of crude oil daily to East St. James Parish, cutting sixty-two miles across south Louisiana through the sensitive Atchafalaya Basin wetlands. The project is opposed by a small collection of landowners resisting rights of way for the project as well as the nonprofits Atchafalaya Basinkeeper and the Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West who say the dredging and ditches for the pipeline are ruining the landscape and destroying their livelihood.⁸² Bayou Bridge will soon be joined in St. James Parish by a proposed \$9.4 billion ethylene oxide plant by Formosa Petrochemical Corporation, which received \$207 million in tax break subsidies from the state that perennially ranks at the bottom in environmental and public health on every major index.⁸³

A recent geographic information system (GIS) mapping study revealed that the polluting industries in St. James are located in the sections with the highest percentages of African Americans, the lowest average household income, and the most residents without a high

school diploma. Meanwhile, the areas of the parish with the highest percentage of residents employed by manufacturing industry tend to be the wealthiest, have the least number of African American residents, and have the most residents with the highest levels of education.⁸⁴ In neighboring St. John the Baptist Parish, a recent US Environmental Protection Agency assessment found that areas on the poorer east side of the Mississippi River are at more than twice the risk for certain cancers than their neighbors on the west side, where there are fewer petrochemical facilities. Three years ago, the EPA declared that St. John had the highest cancer risk from airborne pollutants nationwide because of the “likely carcinogen” chloroprene manufactured along the Mississippi River. Just downstream in St. Charles Parish, scientists say residents in one census tract face the highest risk in the country of developing lymphoid or breast cancers from chloroprene.⁸⁵

In order to understand environmental degradation and displacement as what Maldonado calls “tacit persecution,” we must understand how such conditions are created. A political ecology of Louisiana history helps us de-naturalize bad air and weather. Just as God didn’t create a clean slate after Katrina, the social and environmental exploitation by the oil and gas industry has roots in earlier landscape exploitation. According to Diane Austin, the sugar and timber industries, along with the water development projects created to protect them, set the stage and established the actors for oil and gas. Land wrestled from the swamps through levee and drainage programs coincided with the cultivation in the mid-19th century of sugar plantations. Sugar producers imported large numbers of African slaves, which created a rural population outside New Orleans that outnumbered white residents by three to one. Incited by competition from Cuban and West Indies sugar producers, Louisiana planters intensified cultivation and increase economies of scale through land consolidation and new equipment technology such as steam and rail transportation.⁸⁶ New Orleans merchants purchased sugar that was cultivated by slave labor and carried by steamboat powered by wood.

The steam age reached its height by the late 1840s. “From 1850 to 1860, planters seized rich levee crests, drained swamps, constructed canals, dredged rivers, and acquired their neighbors’ properties.” The average size of farms in neighboring St. Mary Parish, for example, nearly doubled, from 230 acres in 1850 to 413 acres by 1860.⁸⁷ By that time, Louisiana planters were producing one-fourth of the world’s sugar and were among the south’s wealthiest slaveholders.⁸⁸ The sugar boom and demand for timber decimated the state’s old growth timberlands. The introduction of the railroads also provided direct access to logging—while disrupting the ecology of the marsh through levee spoil banks that impounded water. Throughout the early 1900s, lumber companies established camps and communities to house workers, mostly blacks and Cajuns, who received low wages or “scrip” payments for long hours and dangerous work. Workers frequently remained indebted to the company store. Their employers occupied key positions in local banks, city and state government, and ship channel companies. Because most of the logging occurred on private land, there was little opportunity for public dissent. Those working in the forests were widely dispersed,⁸⁹ and timber companies moved quickly, clearing one stand to the next. This “pulse” of logging between 1876 and 1956 all but eradicated the cypress forests in Louisiana.⁹⁰

By the early 1930s, just one percent of the cypress forests remained, and the industry was almost completely gone.⁹¹ However, deforestation coincided with rise of oil, discovered in Louisiana in 1901. The state of Louisiana issued the first coastal zone oil lease in 1921. Land development companies began acquiring huge tracts of swampland, which also prompted timber and fur companies to hold onto land and lease it for exploration. In fact,

the oil boom promised that even land too wet for agricultural or timber had potential value for what lay below their surface in the form of mineral rights.

Over at Isle de Jean Charles, tribal members were up against the power of private developers and oil companies backed by the state who forced the residents to sign leases in English for mineral rights they could not read or understand, as most of them did not speak the language. Other tribal members who failed to pay property taxes forfeited their mineral rights to the state which then sold them to oil corporations.⁹² Without land rights in a sacrifice zone, the tribe could not initiate reclamation projects to buffer their immediate property since reclamation projects must be initiated by the landowner and approved by the state.⁹³ The intense production of the surrounding fields from hydrocarbon withdrawal and dredged canals led to extreme subsidence and erosion.⁹⁴ In 1955, the Isle de Jean Charles comprised more than 22,0000 acres, which had been enough land for the community members to farm, trap, and shelter from storms off the Gulf of Mexico. Today, the remaining 320 acres are surrounded by a watery landscape dotted with refinery tanks, flaring gas lines, and pipeline signs warning against anchoring. The Army Corps of Engineers determined it was cheaper to move the people rather than extend the levee. However, to add insult to injury the state-recognized tribe has not yet received federal recognition, which has held up funding for the \$48 million resettlement grant.⁹⁵

Louisiana coastal planners and economic officials point out that the state has strengthened its regulatory oversight for oil production in recent years, and drillers can reduce environmental impacts with improved technology such as directional drilling. Besides, the big oil patch today resides well offshore from the coastal marshes. Most of the inland coastal oil drilling has passed peak production, even though the canals remain open, and the wells uncapped. Yet there is a new kind of energy patch in the western corner of the state. A boom in liquified natural gas (LNG) is happening in the southwestern Chenier plain, which is also threatened from eroding pipeline and navigation canals. More than \$90 billion of LNG projects and pipelines are in various stages of construction or planning in the Chenier.⁹⁶

It seems pretty clear that in Louisiana, environmental sustainability signifies sustaining a healthy business environment at the expense of other ecologies of social and environmental health. Discourses of sustainability flow throughout the state's Master Plan and discussions of the Working Coast. It is arguably the neoliberal valuation of the plan that has coopted imagined futures of Louisiana's wetlands. Sustainable discourse is easily partnered in neoliberalism because it commodifies nature in an attempt to reconceive it as a scarce resource order to save it.⁹⁷ Arturo Escobar, who traces sustainable development discourse to a United Nations report in the late 1970s, says sustainable discourse reconciles two old enemies—economic growth and the preservation of the environment—without any significant adjustments in the market system. "This reconciliation is the result of complex discursive operations of capital, representations of nature, management and science. In the sustainable development discourse nature is reinvented as environment so that capital, not nature and culture, may be sustained."⁹⁸ The political reconciliation hides the fact that the current economic framework itself cannot hope to accommodate environmental concerns without substantial reform or conservation. In fact, it argues for the opposite. Through an effective greenwashing campaign, the industrial polluters and oil companies that have operated for years in the Louisiana wetlands and Gulf of Mexico joined forces with environmentalists in the early 2000s to successfully underwrite a national campaign that framed the oil industry not as the cause of land loss but one of its victims. We can locate the deployment of the "Working Coast" precisely to this campaign, which was developed

after efforts failed in 2000 to win federal support for the state's first comprehensive restoration plan, called Coast 2050.

Seeds of the Master Plan

First passed in 1998, Coast 2050 emerged through a groundswell of community organizing in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s as local environmentalists and industrial interests sparred over causes, and culpability, of land loss.⁹⁹ Coast 2050 contained an "eco-system" view of restoration and environmental management. It also named oil and gas canals as critical causes of coastal erosion and called for cutting gaps into mud "spoil banks" ridges on canals to release entrapped water. It was the first restoration plan to anticipate the role of sea-level rise on the coastal delta. And it included the ambitious Third Delta Conveyance Channel—which was a \$2 billion proposal to produce a new river channel off the Mississippi River to replenish the marsh.¹⁰⁰ All twenty coastal parishes passed resolutions of support. Once passed, the Louisiana delegation was tasked with finding money for the \$14 billion, fifty-year price tag. The state pinned its efforts to a long-standing grievance with the federal government on offshore royalty collections. The Louisiana Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu, who was friendly with the industry, introduced the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) of 1999. She argued that Louisiana supported ninety percent of offshore development in the Gulf for more than fifty years and benefited from decades of economic activity, but had "not received appropriate compensation for the use of its land and the environmental impacts of this production."¹⁰¹ Since more than eighty percent of oil and gas activity in the Gulf of Mexico had taken place for decades beyond Louisiana's three-mile territorial waters, the state received a fraction of the compensation as it did on inshore wells. It shared federal royalty collections equally with all inland states hosting pipelines.¹⁰² "These areas and their fragile environments in Louisiana were sacrificed long ago for the benefit of industry investment and development," Landrieu said. "I intend to ensure that these areas will be ignored no longer."¹⁰³ The act would have boosted Louisiana's annual share of offshore revenues to about \$200 million for fifteen years, far more than the \$40 million a year dedicated to restoration projects under the so-called "Breaux Act" passed in 1990. Louisiana's Secretary of Natural Resources Jack Caldwell cited the Houma Navigation Channel as an example of a federal waterway built mainly to service the Outer Continental Shelf that caused erosion of several square miles of land in south Terrebonne Parish over three decades. "In addition, the Louisiana coast is crisscrossed by 14,000 miles of pipelines," he said.¹⁰⁴ In the past, Louisiana's energy lobby had steadfastly denied the long-term impacts from dredging and drilling.¹⁰⁵ But CARA did not increase royalties paid by the industry. It instead asked for a larger share of existing collections.

In the spring of 2000, Congress took up the legislation along with an environmental bill for Florida's Everglades: the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which was a twenty-year, \$7.8 billion federal request. Congressional support for Louisiana's bill began to wane in early 2000 as anti-drilling proponents believed that revenue sharing might stimulate offshore drilling.¹⁰⁶ Landrieu's amendment failed and with it a federal partnership. But Florida's bill passed. A pair of Louisiana coastal planners attributed Florida's success to a "linchpin issue" that bound disparate groups behind a common message and shared commitment. Florida's lynchpin issue rested on the municipal water supply for south Florida's twenty million people. Louisiana's lynchpin issue was different. "While the loss of so much physical habitat would be dire, environmental concerns alone are not sufficient to warrant the billions needed for comprehensive restoration," they said.¹⁰⁷ So how to convince Congress that Louisiana's coast—similar to Florida's coast in terms of size, rate of disappearance and ecological inventory—was important? "The

relevant question is: Can Louisiana convince the national interest that a “working coast” is worth saving?”[108](#)

James Trip of the Environmental Defense Fund, who had helped form the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) in the 1980s that ultimately led to Coast2050, suggested they approach his old friend and prep-school classmate, the New Orleans banker King Milling, who had deep roots in Louisiana landownership and oil and gas interests.[109](#) Milling was the president of Whitney Bank and former king of Rex, the preeminent Mardi Gras Krewe in the city. Tripp and Mark Davis, the new head of (CRCL) with a background in real estate development appealed to Milling on his own terms: Whitney Bank’s “collateral” of oil and gas infrastructure was disappearing into the sea.[110](#) Milling soon became the public face for the coalition and Louisiana coastal restoration writ-large. “He spoke well, looked the part, and was patently sincere. He saw no conflict between saving his coast and protecting his industry. They were one and the same thing.”[111](#)

In 2001, Republican Governor Mike Foster formed the “Committee on the Future of Coastal Louisiana,” which in February 2002 submitted its report, “Saving Coastal Louisiana: A National Treasure, Recommendations for Implementing an Expanded Coastal Restoration Program.” Milling chaired the new Governor’s Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration and Conservation. Also in 2001, Governor Foster organized a major coastal summit in Baton Rouge. At the summit, Milling said the cost of coastal erosion should be told in dollars, commercial impact, and cultural values. “Oil and gas platforms and facilities, including pipelines . . . will have to be either rebuilt or totally replaced.”[112](#) On August 27, 2002, Governor Foster announced a campaign to increase national awareness of the state’s dramatic coastal land loss, America’s WETLAND: Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana. It was funded by a \$3 million donation from Shell. “Although the entire nation depends on Louisiana’s coastal wetlands for its energy production, seafood harvest, leading port system and wildlife habitat, very few people know they even exist,” said Foster.[113](#) Milling became the spokesman for America’s WETLAND Foundation:

He stated his conviction early and often: coastal stakeholders needed to form a new band of brothers and fight towards a common objective: securing federal (public) funding to restore the zone.[114](#)

What followed was a massive, industry-led public relations campaign. America’s WETLAND partnered with Marmillion & Company, a national strategic communications firm. A media buy was committed by TIME for KIDS and an educational video that premiered at the 2002 Southern Governor’s Association Conference in New Orleans stressing the importance of “America’s Wetland” to the nation’s energy and economic security and its world ecological significance.[115](#) Two days after the governor’s presentation, Tripp’s Environmental Defense Fund praised the America’s WETLAND campaign as an important step toward “informing Americans about the value of vast but threatened coastal wetlands created by the Mississippi River.” The focus of the new effort to restore the coast would focus squarely on river sediment and the past practices of the US Army Corps of Engineers to levee the river and not on curtailing commercial activity in the marsh itself. “Instead of being dumped off the continental shelf, river sediment should be diverted and used to rebuild wetlands,” Tripp said in EDF’s release. “We support the Governor’s efforts to raise awareness about the plight of the wetlands and the federal funding needed to develop and implement a comprehensive, science-based restoration plan.”[116](#)

Tripp and EDF recruited the National Wildlife Federation and National Audubon Society into the campaign.¹¹⁷ America's WETLAND sponsored international wetland science summits, organized congressional briefings, and recruited corporate sponsors. A successful campaign, they said, "will require that Louisianans speak with a unified voice and exhibit a strong commitment to paying the state's share of restoration costs."¹¹⁸ At an early commission meeting in 2003, EDF's Tripp announced that "the environmental community and the energy industry must be partners as one part of creating the political will" for coastal restoration. The President of Shell Chemical echoed, "We must realize that we have been part of the problem and that we can be part of the solution." Essentially, oil and gas would fund the America's WETLAND Foundation campaign.¹¹⁹ The WETLAND group focused their energies through a campaign entitled "America's Energy Coast" that issued a publication called "A Region at Risk" on the nation's vulnerable energy infrastructure. The main highway to reach Port Fourchon—a major hub at the edge of the Louisiana Coast that services offshore energy platforms—was vulnerable to environmental threats. "If broken by storms, floods or further erosion, it can disrupt the flow of goods and services that are the key to fueling America." Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana said,

When we lose resources so vital to our national security, it's as if we're under attack. We should respond accordingly. We would not allow a foreign power to threaten our land without a fight. Therefore, we should not allow a less obvious, but equally threatening power to take our land away.¹²⁰

Members of America's WETLAND and the Governor's Advisory Commission regularly met with officials from the Army Corps of Engineers to develop a "Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Ecosystem Restoration Plan" which revived many projects in the Coast 2050 report such as large-scale river diversions and shoreline stabilization. In 2004, following a five-year, \$20 million study funded by the Army Corps of Engineers and Louisiana, the Corps released its LCA report and environmental assessment of the comprehensive coast-wide plan. "The talking points for Louisiana politicians and coastal advocates had clearly shifted from solely protecting environmental resources to preserving the coast for America's energy and economic needs."¹²¹

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina barreled down on the Gulf Coast and carried out the prophesies of the campaign. Damages from Katrina burnished the state's argument that its infrastructure was integral to the national energy and shipping sectors. Natural gas production through coastal Louisiana dropped by 50 and remained disrupted for months. Plants were damaged. Pipeline deliveries of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel to East Coast buyers were suspended. President Bush ordered the withdraw of emergency oil supplies from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve within salt dome caverns along the Louisiana and Texas coasts. Floodwaters swamped the low-lying highway to Port Fourchon, whose once green adjacent wetlands "resembled a vast open bay."¹²² In the resulting debris and chaos, state officials found their evidence for a federal partnership. The economic disruption of Katrina and Rita highlighted the need to improve Louisiana's hurricane protection systems and restore the wetlands, "upon which so much of our national economy depends."¹²³ State officials folded the necessity of protect existing energy infrastructure into their long-term strategy for coastal restoration. Less than two years later, Congress approved Louisiana's long-sought after revenue-sharing agreement on offshore oil royalties, called Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) (overriding a presidential veto by George W. Bush) and thus enshrining the funding mechanism of the state's coastal restoration efforts to deep water drilling.¹²⁴

Conclusion

As groundbreaking as Coast2050 was in terms of its strategic and regional approach, coastal planners were unable to attract a federal partner without a financial calculus that dollars invested in coastal restoration would be justified through financial return. They had to quantify the value of the wetlands through its industrial productivity, which continues to limit imagined futures for the land. Today as part of any restoration argument, coastal advocates and industrial interests highlight the industrial productivity of the coast in order to justify financial returns on investment. This neoliberal rationale ties the preservation of the coast to the very practices causing its destruction. An emerging moniker of the “Working Coast” for the state’s linchpin issue provided talking points for saving the coast while eliding the problematic strategy of protecting an industry from the destruction it causes and tacitly shifting the financial burden of restoration onto the federal government and US taxpayers. While the plan traffics in discourses of “resilience” on behalf of some communities, it brackets off expectations of sacrifices by capital interests.

Without curtailing drilling, the state leveraged the devastation wrought by Katrina and Rita to successfully renegotiate the state and federal royalty share through GOMESA, something they had failed to accomplish in 2000. They were able to build upon a legacy of extractive thinking by claiming damages caused by historic oil and gas drilling, which required some admission to the industry’s destruction and which they could presumably mitigate through further energy production. They aimed their ire at the Army Corps of Engineers’ leveeing of the Mississippi River, which is only one of several causes to coastal erosion and subsidence. As a result, they produced a plan that I argue rationalizes further activity and reproduces a need for future mitigation measures. In this way, the plan reproduces the conditions for its own possibility. It bolsters a political economic regime that reproduces itself through further interventions in the landscape. It justifies certain intervention efforts under the rationality of economic sustainability through the “Working Coast” that must be maintained as an engine of commerce.

Through its flood protection levees and sediment diversion projects on the river, the Master Plan embeds itself into the land through what Chandra Mukerji frames as “territoriality” or governing from a distance—for all future decisions both scientific and political—to determine which areas to save and which areas to forgo, and how much sediment to divert, to the celebration of some industries and bane of others. Active measures to intervene and reverse coastal erosion are undertaken in order to continue extraction. So ultimately, the cycle continues. It’s part of an ongoing continuum of Louisiana’s political economy of extracting and exhausting its natural resources—from old growth timber and muskrat fur to fisheries and oil and gas.¹²⁵ Extracting resources from the land is part of the state’s identity, which provides the cultural cover of continued extraction if only to justify the ongoing governmentality of mitigation.

All of this begs a fundamental question of whether Louisiana can be separated from the economic rationalities that set the crisis in motion and justify an unending continuum of intervention. Simply, can Louisiana and New Orleans exist without a Working Coast that appears to be both sinking the coast and rationalizing a plan to maintain it? Can we envision the existence of New Orleans and Louisiana without their accompanying signs of extraction—that include not only deep draft shipping along the Mississippi River and a robust oil and gas and petrochemical industry, but also measures to mitigate its damage funded by the extraction itself? Or is Louisiana simply fated to become the Nation’s *disaster laboratory*, either a cautionary tale or model of resiliency for other governments facing the cross-hairs of the approaching onslaught caused by global climate change.

Notes

1. Mike Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 137. 
2. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast* (Baton Rouge, LA: Office of the Governor, 2017), 114; Julie Koppel Maldonado, "A Multiple Knowledge Approach for Adaptation to Environmental Change: Lessons Learned from Coastal Louisiana's Tribal Communities." *Journal of Political Ecology*, 21, no. 1 (2014): 72, <https://doi.org/10.2458/v21i1.21125>. 
3. Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson. "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees.'" *New York Times*, May 2, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/03/us/resettling-the-first-american-climate-refugees.html>. 
4. John McPhee, "Atchafalaya," *New Yorker*, February 23, 1987, 3. 
5. Ned Randolph, "River Activism, 'Levees-Only' and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927," *Media and Communication* 6, no. 1 (2018): 43, <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v6i1.1179>; Liviu Giosan and Angelina Freeman, "How Deltas Work: A Brief Look at the Mississippi River Delta in a Global Context," in *Perspectives on the Restoration of the Mississippi Delta: The Once and Future Delta*, eds. John W. Day, G. Paul Kemp, Angelina M. Freeman, and David P. Muth (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 29–32. 
6. Brady R. Couvillion, Holly Beck, Donald Schoolmaster, and Michelle Fischer, *Land Area Change in Coastal Louisiana (1932 to 2016): Scientific Investigations Map 3381* (Reston, VA: U.S. Geological Survey, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.3133/sim3381>. 
7. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017), ES1–ES21. 
8. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017), 120. 
9. David Festa, "In a Race against Time, Officials Collaborate to Speed up Coastal Restoration. Here's How," *Growing Returns*, April 23, 2018, <http://blogs.edf.org/growingreturns/2018/04/19/officials-collaborate-to-speed-up-coastal-restoration>. 
10. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017), ES-2. 
11. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 115–118. 
12. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan for Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, LA: Office of Governor, 2007). 
13. Jason P. Theriot, *American Energy, Imperiled Coast: Oil and Gas Development in Louisiana's Wetlands*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 195. 
14. Louisiana Recovery Authority, *Progress Report* (Baton Rouge, LA: Office of the Governor, December 2007), 1. <http://lra.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/QuarterlyReports/December2007QtReport.pdf>. 

15. Walter Isaacson, "The Greatest Education Lab How Katrina Opened the Way for an Influx of School Reformers," *TIME*, September 6, 2007,
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,1659767,00.html>. 
16. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2008), 4. 
17. Alan Mallach, *Where Will People Live?: New Orleans' Growing Rental Housing Challenge* (Washington, DC: Center for Community Progress, March 2016),
<https://nola.gov/city-planning/major-studies-and-projects/affordable-housing-impact-statement-study/nora-rental-housing-report/>. 
18. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 4. 
19. Donald W. Davis, "Historical Perspective on Crevasses, Levees, and the Mississippi River," in *Transforming New Orleans & Its Environs: Centuries Of Change*, ed. Craig E. Colten (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 89,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7zw9kz.12>. 
20. Craig E. Colten, "Basin Street Blues: Drainage and Environmental Equity in New Orleans, 1890–1930." *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, no. 2 (2002): 237–57,
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2001.0400>. 
21. Colten, "Basin Street Blues." 
22. J. David Rogers, "Development of the New Orleans Flood Protection System prior to Hurricane Katrina," *Journal of Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Engineering*, 134, no. 5 (May 2008): 602-617. 
23. Richard Campanella, "Disaster and Response in an Experiment Called New Orleans, 1700s–2000s," *Natural Hazard Science* (March 2016): 21,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefo/9780199389407.013.1>. 
24. Peirce F. Lewis, *New Orleans: The Making of an Urban Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 2003). 
25. Campanella, "Disaster and Response," 21. 
26. Richard Campanella, 2007, "Above Sea Level New Orleans: The Residential Capacity of Orleans Parish's Higher Ground," The Center for Bioenvironmental Research Whitepaper, Coypu Foundation, April 2007,
http://richcampanella.com/assets/pdf/study_Campanella%20analysis%20on%20Above-Sea-Level%20New%20Orleans.pdf. 
27. Davis, "Historical Perspective," 89. 
28. William Freudenburg, Robert Gramling, Shirley Laska, and Kai T. Erikson, "Disproportionality and Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet," *Social Science Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 497–515,
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2009.00628.x>. 
29. Gary Rivlin, "Why New Orleans Black Residents Are Still Under Water After Katrina," *New York Times Magazine*, August 23, 2015,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/magazine/why-new-orleans-black-residents-are-still-under-water-after-katrina.html> 
30. Louisiana Recovery Authority, *Progress Report*, 1. 
31. Southeast Louisiana Levee Flood Protection Authority, accessed February 10, 2018,
<http://www.slfpa.com>. 
32. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan for Louisiana*, 96–99. 

33. "Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act," U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.boem.gov/Oil-and-Gas-Energy-Program/Energy-Economics/Revenue-Sharing/Index.aspx>); Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017), 5. 
34. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017), 128–132. 
35. Oliver Houck, "The Reckoning: Oil and Gas Development in the Louisiana Coastal Zone," *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* 28, no. 185 (Summer 2015): 1–46. 
36. "Clarity on GOMESA funding and FY19 Annual Plan Presented at CPRA Board Meeting," Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, December 13, 2017, <http://coastal.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017.12.13-GOMESA.pdf>. 
37. "Louisiana's Draft RESTORE Act Multiyear Implementation and Expenditure Plan," Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, 2015, accessed February 10, 2018, <http://coastal.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Draft-RESTORE-Act-Multiyear-Implementation-and-Expenditure-Plan.pdf>. 
38. Kevin Sack and John Schwartz, "Left to Louisiana's Tides A Village Fights for its Life." *New York Times*, February 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/24/us/jean-lafitte-floodwaters.html>. 
39. Sherwood M. Gagliano, *Canals, Dredging, and Land Reclamation in the Louisiana Coastal Zone* (Baton Rouge: Center for Wetland Resources, (Louisiana State University, 1973), 18. 
40. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 116. 
41. Louisiana Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast* (Baton Rouge, LA: Office of the Governor, 2012), 170. 
42. River and Coastal Center, Tulane University, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://www2.tulane.edu/projects/rccenter.cfm>. 
43. "Tackling inequities in New Orleans by supporting entrepreneurs since 2009," accessed July 26, 2018, <http://gopropeller.org>; ORA Estuaries, a startup founded by a pair of LSU engineering students, received some startup money for winning Propeller's "Big Idea" competition in 2015 and the "New Orleans Water Challenge" in 2014 for their Oyster Break system, which is a rock-like modular platform for colonizing oyster larvae and growing oyster reefs. The company's mission is to "empower coastal communities to rebuild the historic oyster reefs which provided storm resiliency, food security and economic opportunity." 
44. "The River Moves from Land to Land," accessed July 26, 2018, <http://www.thewatercampus.org/>. 
45. Environmental Defense Fund, "New Study Shows How Performance-Based Bonds Can Speed Up Coastal Resilience Efforts EDF and Quantified Ventures Outline Steps for Implementing First-ever Environmental Impact Bond for Wetland Restoration," August 18, 2018, <https://www.edf.org/media/new-study-shows-how-performance-based-bonds-can-speed-coastal-resilience-efforts>. 
46. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 116. 
47. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 116–117. 

48. Big River Coalition, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.bigrivercoalition.org>. 
49. Mark Schleifstein, "Dredging Mississippi River to 50 Feet Clears Corps Approval Hurdle," *Nola.com*, August 20, 2018, https://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2018/08/dredging_mississippi_river_to.html. 
50. Ashley Carse, "Nature as Infrastructure: Making and Managing the Panama Canal Watershed," *Social Studies of Science* 42, no. 4 (2012): 539–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312712440166>. 
51. David Jacobs, "Making Mississippi River Deeper Remains Unknown—and Unfunded—Variable in Local Impact from Panama Canal Expansion," June 8, 2016, <https://www.businessreport.com/business/making-mississippi-river-deeper-remains-unknown-unfunded-variable-local-impact-panama-canal-expansion>. 
52. Krista L. Jankowski, Torbjörn E Törnqvist, and Anjali M. Fernandes, "Vulnerability of Louisiana's Coastal Wetlands to Present-Day Rates of Relative Sea-Level Rise," *Nature Communications* 8 (2017): 14792; Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017). 
53. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration* (2017) cites a 2015 report by LSU and RAND Corporation which estimates that direct and indirect impacts of land loss in coastal Louisiana "puts between \$5.8 billion and \$7.4 billion in annual output at risk" and increases national storm damage impact between \$8.7 billion and \$51.5 billion with increased economic disruption between \$5 billion to \$51 billion in total lost output. 
54. Erik Swyngedouw, "Scaled Geographies: Nature, Place, and the Politics of Scale," in *Scale and Geographic Inquiry: Nature, Society and Method* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 129–153. 
55. R. Eugene Turner, "Discussion of: Olea, R.A. and Coleman, J.L., Jr., 2014. A Synoptic Examination of Causes of Land Loss in Southern Louisiana as Related to the Exploitation of Subsurface Geological Resources. *Journal of Coastal Research*, 30(5), 1025–1044," *Journal of Coastal Research* 30, no. 6 (2014): 1330–1334; Shea Penland et al., *Process Classification of Coastal Land Loss Between 1932 and 1990 in the Mississippi River Delta Plain, Southeastern Louisiana*, U.S. Geological Survey (2000), <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2000/of00-418/ofr00-418.pdf>. 
56. Jeremy B.C. Jackson and Steve Chapple, *Breakpoint: Reckoning with America's Environmental Crises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 113. 
57. Houck, "The Reckoning," 12. 
58. Mark Davis, interview by author, September 24, 2018. 
59. Randy Moertle, telephone interview by author, August 31, 2018. 
60. Denise Reed, telephone interview by author, September 20, 2018. 
61. Reed, interview. 
62. Denise J. Reed and Lee Wilson. "Coast 2050: A New Approach to Restoration of Louisiana Coastal Wetlands." *Physical Geography* 25, no. 1 (2004): 4–21, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3646.25.1.4>; R. A. Morton, J. C. Bernier, and J. A. Barras, "Evidence of Regional Subsidence and Associated Interior Wetland Loss Induced by Hydrocarbon Production," *Environmental Geology* 50, no. 2 (2006): 261–274; Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Integrated*

63. Long Beach was once known as the “Sinking City,” where 3.7 billion barrels were extracted from the Wilmington Oil Field that created a 20-square mile “subsidence bowl” of up to 29 feet deep around the Port of Long Beach and the coastal strand of the City of Long Beach. In the 1950s, water injection was shown to re-pressure the oil formations, stop the underground compaction as well as surface subsidence, and increase oil recovery—which ultimately led to the California Subsidence Act in 1958. “Subsidence,” Long Beach Energy Resources, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.longbeach.gov/lbgo/about-us/oil/subsidence/>. 
64. Robert Eugene Turner, “Doubt and the Values of an Ignorance-Based World View for Restoration: Coastal Louisiana Wetlands,” *Estuaries and Coasts* 32, no. 6 (2009):1054–1068, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12237-009-9214-4>; R. E. Turner, “The Mineral Sediment Loading of the Modern Mississippi River Delta: What is the Restoration Baseline?” *Journal of Coastal Conservation* 21, no. 6 (2017): 867–872, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11852-017-0547-z>; Jackson and Chapple, *Breakpoint*, 2018. 
65. Craig E. Colten and Scott Hemmerling, 2014, “Social Impact Assessment Methodology for Diversions and Other LA Coastal Master Plan Restoration and Protection Projects,” The Water Institute of the Gulf, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, March 2014, https://thewaterinstitute.org/assets/docs/reports/4_22_2014_Social-Impact-Assessment-Methodology-for-Diversions-and-other-Louisiana-Coastal-Master-Plan-Projects.pdf, 61–66. 
66. Craig Edward Colten, “The Place for Humans in Louisiana Coastal Restoration,” *Labor & Engenho* 4 (2015): 6–18. 
67. Rachel G. Hunter et al., “Using Natural Wetlands for Municipal Effluent Assimilation: A Half-Century of Experience for the Mississippi River Delta and Surrounding Environ,” in *Multifunctional Wetlands. Environmental Contamination Remediation and Management*, ed. N. Nagabhatla and C. Metcalfe (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018). 
68. Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1883), chapter 1. 
69. “Hypoxia 101,” April 6, 2017, <https://www.epa.gov/ms-htf/hypoxia-101>. D.A. Goolsby, “Mississippi Basin Nitrogen Flux Believed to Cause Gulf Hypoxia: EOS, American Geophysical Union,” *Transactions* 81, no. 29 (2000): 321–327. N.R. Rabalais, R.E. Turner, D. Justic, Q. Dortch, and W.J. Wiseman Jr, *Characterization of Hypoxia: Topic 1 Report for the Integrated Assessment of Hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico*, NOAA Coastal Ocean Program Decision Analysis Series No. 15. (Silver Springs, MD: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2000). 
70. Faimon A. Roberts, III, “Deadline in Plaquemines Parish-State Standoff Passes without Action,” *New Orleans Advocate*, June 29, 2018, https://www.theadvocate.com/new_orleans/news/environment/article_2cd394de-7be5-11e8-88f5-73f3952a60be.html. 
71. Jackson and Chapple, *Breakpoint*, 2018, 112–114. 
72. Maldonado, “A Multiple Knowledge Approach,” 68. 
73. Toby Miller, *Greenwashing Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018). 
74. Jolene S. Shirley, “Louisiana Coastal Wetlands: A Resource At Risk,” accessed September 28, 2018, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/la-wetlands/>. 

75. Miller, *Greenwashing Culture*, 74. 
76. Rachel Archer, "Public Comments," Communities Adaptation Leadership Forum, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA, August 29, 2018. 
77. Jillian Ambrose, "BHP Billiton Backs BP's Return to Gulf of Mexico with £1.75bn Investment," *The Telegraph*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/02/09/bhp-billiton-backs-bps-return-gulf-mexico-175bn-investment/> 
78. Archer, "Public Comments." 
79. Jon Yeomans and Donna Bowater, "One Year On, Brazil Battles to Rebuild after the Samarco Mining Disaster." *Telegraph*, October 15, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/10/15/one-year-on-brazil-battles-to-rebuild-after-the-samarco-mining-d/> 
80. Audine Bartlett, "Foreign Bribery Update: A Harsh Lesson for a Global Miner," Carter Newell Lawyers Resources Newsletter, June 2015, July 29, 2018, https://www.carternewell.com/icms_docs/218542_Foreign_bribery_update_A_harsh_lesson_for_a_global_miner.pdf 
81. Maldonado, "A Multiple Knowledge Approach," 63. 
82. David Mitchell, "St. James Parish Council Narrowly Approves Land Use Needed for Controversial Bayou Bridge Pipeline," *The Advocate*, August 23, 2017, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_75ce88a4-885e-11e7-b190-2b6288b27150.html 
83. Nationally, Louisiana ranks fourth in all cancer rates, fifth in heart disease, first in kidney disease and first in septicemia, second in percentage of births to unwed mothers, first in cesarean deliveries, second in preterm birth, and second in low birthrate. "National Center for Health Statistics," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 7, 2016, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/louisiana.htm>. 
84. Abigail D. Blodgett, "An Analysis of Pollution and Community Advocacy in 'Cancer Alley': Setting an Example for the Environmental Justice Movement in St James Parish, Louisiana, Local Environment," *The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 11, no. 6 (2006): 647-661, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549830600853700>. 
85. Steve Hardy, Della Hasselle, and Nick Reimann, "New Cancer-Causing Danger in Baton Rouge-New Orleans Corridor, EPA Report Says," *The Advocate*, September 29, 2018, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_7da74512-c376-11e8-a2f0-bfcdeb36764f.html. 
86. Diane E. Austin, "Coastal Exploitation, Land Loss, and Hurricanes: A Recipe for Disaster," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 4 (December 2006): 671-91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4496511>. 
87. Diane E. Austin, *Morgan City's History in the Era of Oil and Gas—Perspectives of Those Who Were There*, volume III of *History of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry in Southern Louisiana* (New Orleans, LA: US Department of the Interior, September 2008), 5. 
88. Austin, *Morgan City's History*, 5. 
89. Austin, "Coastal Exploitation," 676. 
90. P. A. Keddy, D. Campbell, T. Mcfalls, G. P. Shaffer, R. Moreau, C. Dranguet, and R. Heleniak, "The Wetlands of Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas: Past, Present and



91. Austin, *Morgan City's History*, 676. [D](#)
92. Maldonado, "A Multiple Knowledge Approach." [D](#)
93. Davis, interview. [D](#)
94. "The Island," Isle De Jean Charles, Louisiana, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.isledejeancharles.com/>. [D](#)
95. Sara Sneath, "Louisiana Tribes Say Federal Recognition Will Help to Face Threat of Climate Change," *Nola.com*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.nola.com/expo/news/erry-2018/07/449c2f22d39490/louisiana-tribes-say-federal-r.html>. [D](#)
96. The Houston-based Cheniere LNG facility located on the Louisiana side of Sabine Pass in 2016 became the first US facility to export LNG. In February 2018, the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration ordered two of the five liquefied natural gas tanks shut down after an investigation found 12 events of leaking and cracking outer tank. Mark Schleifstein, "Sabine Pass LNG Ordered to Shut down Leaking Gas Storage Tanks," *Nola.com*, February 10, 2018, https://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2018/02/sabine_pass_lng_ordered_to_shu.html. [D](#)
97. Arturo Escobar, "Construction Nature," *Futures* 28, no. 4 (1996): 325–43, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(96\)00](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(96)00). [D](#)
98. Escobar, "Construction Nature," 330. [D](#)
99. Houck, "The Reckoning." [D](#)
100. Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force and the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Authority, *Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana: Report of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force and the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Authority* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, 1998.) 1–163. Accessed December 10, 2018. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.131.5327&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [D](#)
101. Theriot, *American Energy*, 187. [D](#)
102. P. B. Sanders, "Blanco v. Burton: Louisiana's Struggle for Cooperative Federalism in Offshore Energy Development," *Louisiana Law Review* 69, no. 1 (2008). [D](#)
103. Theriot, *American Energy*, 187. [D](#)
104. Theriot, *American Energy*, 188. [D](#)
105. Houck, "The Reckoning." [D](#)
106. Rex H. Caffey, and Mark Schexnayder, "Coastal Louisiana and South Florida: A Comparative Wetland Inventory," Interpretive Topic Series on Coastal Wetland Restoration in Louisiana, Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, (Narragansett, RI: National Sea Grant Library, 2003): 1-8/ https://eos.ucs.uri.edu/seagrant_Linked_Documents/lsu/lsug03021.pdf [D](#)
107. Caffey and Schexnayder, "Coastal Louisiana and South Florida," 5. [D](#)
108. Caffey and Schexnayder, "Coastal Louisiana and South Florida," 7. [D](#)
109. Houck, "The Reckoning," 28. [D](#)
110. Milling's uncle had also formed Louisiana Land & Exploration, an enormous oil producer and once one of the largest private landowners in South Louisiana until it sold to an out-of-state company. Another client was Continental Land and Fur Company, whose original interests in muskrat pelts had long ago been replaced by its land's mineral rights. Houck, "The Reckoning," 25–28. [D](#)

111. Houck, "The Reckoning," 25–28. [D](#)
112. Theriot, *American Energy*, 192. [D](#)
113. Theriot, *American Energy*, 191–193. [D](#)
114. Houck, "The Reckoning," 28. [D](#)
115. America's Wetland Foundation, <https://www.americaswetland.com/>. [D](#)
116. Theriot, *American Energy*, 192. [D](#)
117. Houck, "The Reckoning." [D](#)
118. Caffey and Schexnayder, "Coastal Louisiana and South Florida." [D](#)
119. Theriot, *American Energy*; Houck, "The Reckoning." America's Wetland Foundation's major donor list identifies Shell as its "World Sponsor." Sustainability Sponsors include Chevron, ConocoPhillips, and ExxonMobil. America's Wetland Foundation sponsored an ad in the journal article, saying that a successful campaign, "will require that Louisianans speak with a unified voice and exhibit a strong commitment to paying the state's share of restoration costs." (Caffey and Schexnayder, "Coastal Louisiana and South Florida.") [D](#)
120. "Press Releases Archives," America's Wetland Foundation, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.americaswetland.com/category/press-releases/>. [D](#)
121. Theriot, *American Energy*, 95. [D](#)
122. Theriot, *American Energy*, 197. [D](#)
123. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, *Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan*, ES–1. [D](#)
124. Louisiana Recovery Authority, *Progress Report*. [D](#)
125. R. Gramling and R. Hagelman, "A Working Coast: People in the Louisiana Wetlands." *Journal of Coastal Research* (2005): 112–133, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25737052>. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Ned Randolph



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

David Zeglen, "Political Economies of Basic Income," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.9>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)
Universal Basic Income

Introduction: Political Economies of Basic Income

David Zeglen

ABSTRACT Basic income is an idea almost as old as capitalism itself, appearing very early in the course of its historical development. The emergence of the idea of a basic income in the first few centuries of capitalism's development in England became inextricably linked to economic crisis. Unsurprisingly, interest in basic income plans have resurfaced yet again in the post-2008 conjuncture. Current debates about basic income often invoke the framework of a morality play about personal responsibility, work ethic, and frugality that obfuscate organic features of the capitalist social formation, such as economic crisis. Therefore, this forum returns to the Marxist approach to answer the persistent questions that basic income provokes, and to help enlarge the Left debate on basic income that exists on the margins of public discourse.

Basic income is an idea almost as old as capitalism itself, appearing very early in the course of its historical development. After the moment of primitive accumulation in England, the Tudor regime began to codify the English Poor Laws in an attempt to offer subsistence support in the form of money, food, or clothing via local parishes to newly displaced workers. As Ellen Meeksins Wood argues, "in the sixteenth century—in the early years of capitalist development and just at the moment when critics were beginning to cite enclosure as a major social problem—England established the first systematic, national and state-regulated 'welfare' program [the Poor Laws] in response to the apparent threat to social order arising from the expropriation of direct producers and a growing population of propertyless 'masterless men.'"¹

But this particular historical conjuncture was also defined by a significant second step in the history of primitive accumulation: the state's simultaneous war on these propertyless masterless men via what Marx referred to as "bloody legislation."² Since the newly dispossessed proletariat could be neither fully absorbed nor immediately adapt to the workplace discipline of said manufactures if employed, legislation was passed to enact great violence on the dispossessed to socialize the proletariat into the disciplinary apparatus of capital. As Marx enumerates, this legislation entailed the legalization of imprisonment, whipping, enslavement, flogging, branding, and mutilation of beggars and vagabonds; the legal regulation of wages to ensure profits for capitalists; and finally, the nullification and prohibition of worker's trade unions. Thus, while the early capitalist state apparatus developed an inchoate welfare system, it simultaneously enacted ruthless violence on its newly-proletarianized beneficiaries.

In the midst of the Industrial Revolution, the English Poor Laws were further amended with the Berkshire Bread Act of 1795, better known as the Speenhamland system. The Speenhamland system introduced a proto-basic income scheme paid out of council rates that gave a subsistence wage based on the price of bread and the size of the receiving family to thousands of poor farm workers in the south of England. According to E. P. Thompson, the Berkshire legislation was prompted by structural problems that had been building for decades: an exceptionally severe winter in 1794 which led to mass crop

failure had been compounded by inflation driven by continual war and loss of income from home manufacture due to the industrialization of production in the north. The persistence of bloody legislation also continued despite the fact that the capitalist mode of production had become relatively self-sufficient enough to not require such brutal extra-economic violence. Despite this, as Marx states, “the ruling classes were unwilling to be without the weapons of the old arsenal in case some emergency should arise.”³ Thus, the economic crisis that climaxed in 1795 with an upsurge in food riots was predicated on the persistence of the moral economy as well as continuing social conditions of dispossession and bloody legislation.⁴

In summary, although contemporary workers in the core of the world-system are, for the most part, left to the “natural laws of production,” i.e. their market dependence on capital that springs from the conditions of production itself, during the historical emergence of the capitalist mode of production, the growing bourgeoisie was heavily reliant upon the power of the state in order to make a profit. Thus, the emergence of the idea of a basic income in the first few centuries of capitalism’s development in England became inextricability linked to the social conditions of dispossession, the criminalization of vagabondage, and economic crisis. As Meiksins Wood argues, this is because “the state must help to keep alive a propertyless population which has no other means of survival when work is unavailable, maintaining a ‘reserve army’ of workers through the inevitable cyclical declines in the demand for labor” even while this propertyless population is being dispossessed and brutally abused.⁵

While primitive accumulation and bloody legislation has mostly shifted to the periphery of the world-system, basic income in the core remains linked to economic crisis, albeit under the mediating influence of different socio-political conditions. As Peter Sloman confirms in his survey of basic income schemes throughout the 20th century, proposals for basic income historically tend to appear during a crisis of capitalism.⁶ For instance, the Great Depression provoked the Roosevelt administration into providing a continued income after the age of 65 to the elderly via social security. The economic crisis of 1957–61 followed by the “rediscovery of poverty” during the recessionary 1960s also generated a flurry of basic income proposals during the decade ranging from Milton Friedman’s negative income tax and the Nixon administration’s proposed Family Assistance Plan to John Kenneth Galbraith’s cowritten letter to Congress in the *New York Times* arguing for a basic income for all Americans.⁷ The letter also prefigured a series of basic income pilot programs across North America, including four in the United States and a five-year federally-funded program in Dauphin, Canada, beginning in 1973. The collapse of the post-war settlement in the 1980s also saw the concomitant rise of the Basic Income Earth Network, a network of academics and activists dedicated to promoting and implementing universal basic income schemes in countries all around the world.⁸

Unsurprisingly, interest in basic income plans has resurfaced yet again in the post-2008 conjuncture. While new basic income pilot programs have been launched in The Netherlands, Finland, Namibia, and India (among other countries), an eclectic cast of American academics, activists, politicians, and Silicon Valley venture capitalists have also called for some form of basic income.⁹ Certainly, it seems undeniable that general support for basic income is more popular than ever. However, debate over basic income has also intensified, resulting in significant disagreements over competing models (targeted, universal, or the negative tax), the long-term economic impacts of any scheme, and strategic questions about political progressivism. Is universal basic income a “revolutionary reform,” capable of facilitating deeper transformations in social relations?¹⁰ Or is a basic income, universal or otherwise, merely a technocratic fix for managing and pacifying an increasingly precarious working class?¹¹ Does basic income encourage

idleness or does it lead to more liberating effects in terms of leisure time?¹² What impact would basic income have on the functioning of the market?

Interestingly, these very same questions about basic income were also being asked by a royal commission of the British parliament during a reevaluation of the English Poor Laws and the Speenhamland system in 1832, thus highlighting the enduring problems the idea of a basic income provokes in the public imaginary.¹³ Marx and Engels likewise took up the challenge of answering these questions about Speenhamland in their own respective analyses of the English working class.¹⁴ Although drawing on parliamentary documents like the royal commission's report, Marx and Engels' methodology for assessing Speenhamland differed considerably from the bourgeois approach of the royal commission: while Marx and Engels addressed the structural sources of inequality under capitalism that led to the emergence of a basic income scheme, the royal commission invoked crude applications of an already dubious Malthusian framework to assess the conditions of poverty in England in relation to Speenhamland.

The underlying motivation of this forum on basic income is to respond to the fact that this bourgeois approach to answering these perennial questions continues to dominate contemporary public discourse. As Fred Block and Margaret Somers point out, politicians and policy experts continue to consult the royal commission's report on Speenhamland to deliberate the merits and shortcomings of contemporary basic income proposals.¹⁵ In short, current debates about basic income often invoke the framework of a morality play about personal responsibility, work ethic, and frugality that obfuscate organic features of the capitalist social formation, such as economic crisis. Therefore, this forum returns to the Marxist approach to answer the persistent questions that basic income provokes and to help enlarge the Left debate on basic income that exists on the margins of public discourse.¹⁶

This approach involves specific methodological principles that also represent an underutilized tradition within cultural studies. For instance, this forum's contributors remain committed to understanding the idea of basic income in relation to the social totality, which involves understanding the relations that exist between the political, economic, and socio-cultural realms, with an "emphasis on the critique of political economy."¹⁷ As this introduction suggests, this approach also involves applying a dialectical historical logic that both situates basic income within the contingencies of a given conjuncture, and understands how a given conjuncture is historically conditioned by larger structural processes.¹⁸ This forum's contributors therefore use Marxist theory as their entry point into questions about basic income.

In my own piece in the forum, "[Basic Income as Ideology from Below](#)," I theorize that the demand for a basic income emerges from the material inversion of social relations that occurs under capitalism. According to Marx, the inversion of material social relations appears as what they are—social relations mediated by things—which occurs on the level of the exchange-form, not on the level of consciousness. Considered from the vantage point of fetishism and common sense, I therefore suggest that basic income demands are rational rather than the product of false consciousness, which in turn informs how the Left should organize "good sense" to win workers over into a hegemonic alliance.

[Caroline West](#) considers what effects a universal basic income could have on disrupting social and economic inequality in the tensions of the urban-rural divide. As Marx points out, capitalism naturalizes "a hierarchical division in the social and economic order with the 'separation of town and country and to the conflict of their interests.' Urban cities are treated as the valuable center of capitalist and intellectual labor," while "rural areas are relegated to the peripheral, lesser valued physical labor." West therefore frames her

inquiry on the political economy of land and labor in the collapse of coal industry “company towns” and its structural aftermath in Central Appalachia.

[Kimberly Klinger](#) explores whether universal basic income presents an opportunity for more meaningful work. As Marx argues, labor under capitalism alienates humans from not only the products of their labor, but from their very nature. Furthermore, Klinger elaborates, “capitalist labor presents a ‘double freedom’ for the worker that is, of course, anything but free: the freedom either to work for an exploitative boss or to refuse and starve.” Klinger notes that “universal basic income seemingly allows for a way out of such a conundrum,” but questions whether it would “open the door to allow humanity to regain their status as ‘species-beings’” or merely contribute to the continued denigration of social relations under capital.

Finally, drawing upon the Marxist-feminist tradition of the Wages for Housework movement, [Lindsey Macdonald](#) applies theories of labor decommodification, market socialism, and social reproduction to argue that universal basic income is a contradictory perspective with both reactionary and progressive undercurrents. However, Macdonald urges caution, rather than dismissal of the universal basic income perspective. While refuting more conventional economic analyses that lead to common refrains against universal basic income, Macdonald suggests possible ways to bend universal basic income towards more explicitly socialist aims.

Notes

1. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2005), 18. [🔗](#)
2. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 1990), 896–904. [🔗](#)
3. Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 902. [🔗](#)
4. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 64–67, 142–143. [🔗](#)
5. Wood, *Empire of Capital*, 18. [🔗](#)
6. Peter Sloman, “Universal Basic Income in British Politics, 1918–2018: From a ‘Vagabond’s Wage’ to a Global Debate,” *Journal of Social Policy* 47, no. 3 (December 2017). [🔗](#)
7. Jyotsna Sreenivasan, “A Statement by Economists on Income Guarantees and Supplements,” *Poverty and the Government in America: A Historical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 269. [🔗](#)
8. Basic Income Earth Network, <https://basicincome.org>. [🔗](#)
9. For instance, the Movement for Black Lives platform and the widely circulated Leap Manifesto include calls for a basic income. Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, and Jeff Bezos have endorsed basic income, as have Jimmy Carter, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and Bernie Sanders, amongst others. Academics who support basic income include Robert Reich, Charles Murray, Philippe Van Parijs, David Graeber, and Nick Srnicek. Switzerland also became the first country in the world to vote on a universal basic income in 2016, which would have provided monthly payments equivalent to \$2,550 for every adult resident. However, Swiss voters overwhelmingly rejected the proposal. [🔗](#)
10. Peter Frase, *Four Futures: Life after Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2016). [🔗](#)
11. Frederick Harry Pitts, Lorena Lombardozzi, and Neil Warner, “The Future of Social Democracy: Speenhamland, Automation and the Basic Income: A Warning from History?” *Renewal* 25, no. 3–4 (2017) 145–155. [🔗](#)
12. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and George Ward, “Happiness at Work,” *Said Business School Working Paper* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2943318>. [🔗](#)

13. Nassau William Senior, "Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834,"
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1461>. 
14. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1990); Fredrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 
15. Fred Block and Margaret Somers, "In the Shadow of Speenhamland: Social Policy and the Old Poor Law," *Politics & Society* 31, no. 2 (June 2003), 283–323. Block and Somers also mention that Karl Polanyi's analysis of Speenhamland in *The Great Transformation* is frequently consulted to determine the viability of basic income schemes. 
16. "One Question: Universal Basic Income," *State of Nature*, July 30, 2018,
<http://stateofnatureblog.com/one-question-universal-basic-income/>. 
17. Randall K. Cohn, Sara Regina Mitcho, and John M. Woolsey, "Cultural Studies: Always Already Disciplinary," *Renewal of Cultural Studies*, ed. Paul Smith (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 32. 
18. Paul Smith, "Birmingham–Urbana-Champaign 1964–1990; or, Cultural Studies," *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, ed. Imre Szeman, Sarah Blacker, and Justin Sully (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2017), 65. 

 [Bio](#)



David Zeglen

David Zeglen is a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies program at George Mason University. For his dissertation, he is researching the applicability of Trotsky's concept of uneven and combined development as a theory of cultural globalization. He is currently co-editing a special issue of *Celebrity Studies* with Neil Ewen on right-wing populist celebrity politicians in Europe due out in 2019. He is also working on an article about the rise of Cultural Marxism as an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory in the United States.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

David Zeglen, "Basic Income as Ideology from Below," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.10>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)
Universal Basic Income

Basic Income as Ideology from Below

David Zeglen

ABSTRACT Most Left critiques of basic income assume a model of “false consciousness” on the part of basic income advocates. These critiques do not account for how desires for a basic income may also come from the material inversion of social relations that occurs under capitalism. Considered from the vantage point of fetishism and common sense, basic income demands appear rational rather than the product of false consciousness, which in turn informs how the left should organize “good sense” to build a hegemonic bloc.

Introduction

Recent Left critiques of basic income proposals often take the tone of a traditional ideology critique predicated on some notion of “false consciousness.” As I elaborate below, this form of ideology critique makes several strong claims that I incorporate into my own arguments about basic income. However, this critique also tends to overlook some of the main tasks of theorizing ideology in a social formation, namely how a concept like basic income can appeal to people, and how this appeal can be rooted in underlying material inversions of social relations in a capitalist society. As a consequence, strategies for engaging with the realities of capitalist domination and exploitation remain incomplete, at best. Therefore, I have chosen to narrowly focus on basic income from the vantage point of what can be crudely called “ideology from below,” as opposed to an analysis focused on how specific ideological apparatuses from above inculcate false consciousness. Furthermore, I argue that the concept of “surplus” functions as a rhetorical bridge between the common-sense appeal of basic income and a more revolutionary consciousness about capitalism that can lead to the negation of a demand for basic income in favor of more radical outcomes.

My argument rests on two claims: first, I assert that the desire for basic income can be categorized as an “objective thought-form.” An objective thought-form is a form of thought that is based on a person’s perception about capitalism as they directly experience it. Under capitalism, people experience their social relations with each other indirectly, since these relations are mediated by various things such as value, price, money, capital, and commodities. Thus, capitalism appears to people as an economic system of commodity production which involves things that regulate society as an independent, or natural, force beyond their control. Since people experience their social relations as social relations mediated by things, people’s thoughts about these social relations are socially valid even if capital’s essence remains concealed. Second, and relatedly, basic income as an objective-thought form constitutes a dimension of “good sense.” Good sense involves both an openness to new experiences as well as a sensitivity to comprehending reality according to direct empirical observations. In other words, it is a sense that avoids the seduction of metaphysical niceties and pseudo-intellectual superstitions but remains limited since it is undialectical thought. I suggest that objective thought-forms constitute a part of good sense, since the former is both empirical and

proto-ideological insofar as it is not regulated from above by ideological state apparatuses until after its appearance.

Since good sense is understood to be a site for organizing revolutionary consciousness, I argue that basic income as an objective thought-form be put in rhetorical motion with the concept of “surplus.” Since a surplus of wealth latently exists within capitalism on the level of objective thought-forms, I suggest that highlighting this notion can help in the struggle for a basic income, while also transcending this demand. Since class is about the production of surplus rather than income, and the capitalist state holds a monopoly on the exercise of violence, highlighting surplus can rhetorically emphasize the obstacles of a current conjuncture predicated on surplus populations while also illustrating the need to militantly organize to overcome these obstacles and create a hegemonic bloc. It is my hope that the terrain for the debate on basic income will shift slightly if these claims are taken up and incorporated into critiques of basic income from the vantage point of ideology from above.

1. Basic Income as an Objective Thought-Form

Although ideological state apparatuses continue to push various schemes for a basic income on the public, basic income is also a demand or desire that comes from workers as an objective thought-form. To review, Marx first introduces the concept of “objective thought-forms” in his description of the commodity fetish in *Capital, Volume 1*. As Marx argues, the commodity fetish is an inversion of social relations under capitalism whereby producers have ceded control to the commodity-form which now controls them. For Marx, this is not an inversion at the level of consciousness since, to the producers who are involved in this exchange-form, these social relations appear as what they are, which is social relations mediated between things. Hence Marx describes the appearance of these relations as socially valid, and therefore objective thought-forms.¹

Furthermore, the fetishes of capital include many other forms, including the wage-fetish. The worker experiences the wage-fetish by understanding wages as the price of labor, while profits are perceived as deriving solely from machines and/or circulation in the market according to supply and demand. When workers do not feel that they are getting a day’s wages for a day’s work, they take on the struggle for wage increases. This struggle occurs on the plane of the objective thought-form of the wage-fetish, since the struggle is about the wage for a day’s work rather than the surplus labor that is obfuscated by the wage-form. Thus, the challenge is to find an effective strategy that takes into consideration workers’ consciousness at the level of the objective thought-form, while being able to transcend it.

However, this is not to argue that workers shouldn’t fight for better wages even if the demand for better wages is framed according to “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work.” Given the global historical record of anti-union violence perpetrated by the state on behalf of employers, it is clear that wage struggles enacted at the level of the objective thought-form pose a real threat to the capitalist class; not only do wage struggles threaten to reduce profitability, this reduction also impacts a given capitalist’s own ability to reproduce itself as it competes with other capitalists. Moreover, regardless of the level of class consciousness, workers must not renounce the labor struggle for improving wage levels, lest the working class become so degraded to depths past salvation.² But when workers do become so degraded that they become closer to the depths past salvation, they experience this degradation as an objective thought-form, via a crisis of individual consumption due to their stagnant wages.

Undoubtedly, workers do experience a crisis of individual consumption as evidenced by low savings and high debt combined with stagnant wages. But these conditions have

arisen from the relations of production themselves, specifically the rise of deindustrialization and concomitant reabsorption of industrial labor into the growing service sector because the service sector, unlike the industry sector, is relatively resistant to regular increases in labor productivity. As a consequence, productivity growth in the service industry remains relatively low, so profits are extracted predominately through longer hours at low pay.³ Indeed, the wage-form obscures the fact that it is not just a crisis of individual consumption for the worker, but a larger crisis of social reproduction. According to Kathi Weeks, a crisis of social reproduction is the intensification of the contradiction between capital accumulation and the ability for a worker to sustain and reproduce their own labor-power.⁴ Thus, a crisis of social reproduction is inherently about the dialectic between wages and surplus regardless of any political framing of that relationship. The questions that need to be more clearly elucidated during a crisis of social reproduction therefore involve asking who gets to decide on how social reproduction occurs, under what conditions, and through what structures.

These questions are not usually asked because under conditions of pauperization, immiseration, and stagnant wages, a demand for an intervention from the state in the form of a wage support system tends to emerge instead. As Daniel Zamora rightly points out, basic income is “a crisis demand, brandished in moments of social retreat and austerity.... The more social gains seem unreachable the more [basic income] makes sense”.⁵ Indeed, as Peter Sloman demonstrates in his 100-year survey of basic income proposals in the United Kingdom, the emergence of basic income demands follow a fairly predictable cyclical pattern since it “attracts the most support at times when the prospects for full employment and living wages seem the most uncertain, and recede from view as governments forge new economic and political settlements.”⁶

Given that the state can and does rely on a massive coercive apparatus in order to protect employers during wage struggles, and that a wage demand usually emerges at moments in which workers are most vulnerable, the notion that a basic income from the state could function as an emancipatory force should therefore be treated with caution. Indeed, such a pervasive notion suggests that there are corresponding fetish forms of the state.

I posit that the demand for a basic income from the capitalist state during a crisis in social reproduction is an objective thought-form, albeit one that is distinct from the classical wage-form. To differentiate the former from the latter, let us call basic income the “state-wage form.” And to elaborate on this argument, it is necessary to trace how the state-wage form has a corresponding state-wage fetish rooted in capitalist social property relations. As Ellen Meiksins Wood argues, the particular historical form the state takes under capitalism is predicated on the formal differentiation of the economic and the political spheres, and more specifically, a differentiation of political functions themselves and their separate allocation to the private economic sphere and the public sphere of the state.⁷ As mentioned earlier, the private economic sphere forms the basis of the various fetish-forms since economic social relations take the form of personal independence based on dependence mediated by things. Relatedly, the separated political sphere undergoes a parallel transformation. While under pre-capitalist social formations, specifically feudal ones, power is framed through social relations of personal dependence in the form of a clearly defined hierarchy (e.g. king → lord → serf), under capitalism the state is formally autonomous and impersonally abstracted from production as if the state is a neutral body, since it appears as indirectly social, gravitating above the economic.⁸

The suggestion that the political sphere has its own fetish forms based on an inversion of social relations goes against several orthodox arguments that fetish forms emerge exclusively from the social relations of production at the economic level. For instance, Engels argued that the realm of the political, as instantiated by the state, is the first

ideological power over man under capitalism and is therefore a form of social practices and institutions that ideologize consciousness from above rather than as a form of consciousness emerging from a fetish below.⁹ Likewise, David Wells emphasizes that the state form of the political realm under capitalism is irreducibly ideological, and not reducible to a fetish.¹⁰ However, while Althusser famously dismissed the fetish argument in *Capital, Volume 1*, his theorization of a social formation as a totality of relatively autonomous instances—namely the economic, political, and ideological—can be extended such that each instance has its own associated logic of fetishism, and consequently their own distinct fetish forms, that are different from ideological apparatuses. Therefore, the political instance contains a state-fetish that forms the basis for the state wage fetish form.

Furthermore, the state wage fetish form explains why arguments in favor of a universal basic income run aground so quickly. Indeed, the demand for a basic income is often framed as a political demand from the capitalist state, as if the state were actually above the interests of capitalism and can be won on that terrain. It is no wonder that universal basic income is discussed in such glowing terms of being able to do so many things if actually implemented, save for the fact that the capitalist state would never implement an adequate form of universal income to do all the things its proponents claim it would do. As Alex Gourevitch and Lucas Stanczyk point out, “the only way an adequate universal basic income could ever be implemented presupposes an organized working class that already has effective control over the shape and the direction of the economy We should think through not how [UBI] will renovate capitalism, but its emancipatory purpose in an already functioning institutional socialism.”¹¹ Likewise, Daniel Zamora states that “the power relations needed to establish [a truly transformational] level of UBI would constitute an exit from capitalism” that presupposes the exit first.¹² Therefore, there is a specific political challenge in fighting for basic income on the level of the objective thought-form of the state-wage fetish, as history demonstrates.

Indeed, the historical view illuminates how the modern capitalist state would likely implement a basic income today. Basic income schemes, albeit in a different form, began at the moment of primitive accumulation in England when the recently-landless, jobless, and homeless led to the codification of the English Poor Laws.¹³ As John Clarke argues, via the payment of a few shillings, the Poor Laws were a calculated attempt to stave off unrest and social dislocation while ensuring that income relief was lower than the lowest wages on offer so that the unemployed would not find relief a better option than the worst forms of paid work.¹⁴ Marx also vividly illustrates the consequences of the poor laws in *Capital, Volume 1*. In the late 18th century, handloom weavers in England were being displaced by new weaving machines like the power looms, leading to impoverishment among the newly-displaced handloomers. In response to the workers immiseration, local magistrates devised a basic income payment via parish relief, which would be given to displaced workers so that they could reproduce themselves. However, as Marx notes, this basic income acted as a wage subsidy for companies since they could continue to pay low wages, while not needing to replace the workers with machines all at once because labor costs were so low. As a consequence, basic income exacerbated and strung out the handloom weavers who were in competition with the machines, and as Marx states, “this tragedy dragged on for decades.”¹⁵ Sloman also concludes that over the past 100 years in the UK, conservative, liberal, and social democratic politicians invariably gut the “universal” out of various basic income schemes and ensure that the income being proposed is always substantially lower than the cost of living.¹⁶

Despite this history, it is still reckless to abandon the struggle over a state wage just because it occurs on the plane of the state wage-fetish, just as Marx argues that it is

similarly reckless to abandon the struggle over wage increases simply because said struggle occurs on the plane of the wage-fetish. Indeed, what the wage struggle and the state-wage struggle have in common beyond their respective roots in a fetish logic is that they are both utterly necessary for organizing workers and temporarily improving their lives, while also being completely inadequate in addressing the deeper structural contradictions of capitalist social property relations and the power of the state. Therefore, the question remains about how to both address the struggle for a basic income while leveraging this struggle into more transformative demands for a socialist society.

2. The State Wage Fetish as a Part of Good Sense

Before suggesting how basic income can be channeled into a vision for workers, it is important to stress Marx's point that an objective thought-form operates both on the level of social reality and practical consciousness. As a consequence, objective thought-forms cannot be banished by rational argumentation since they are deeply anchored in socio-economic reality. As Marx states, "even when scientifically disproved, the fetish's everyday validity and efficacy remain unbroken, since the actual agents of production themselves feel completely at home in these estranged and irrational forms . . . for these are precisely the configurations of appearance in which they move, and with which they are daily involved."¹⁷ Yet, Left critiques of basic income often suggest that advocates suffer from a false consciousness that can only be remedied with empirical and rational arguments. For instance, Alex Gourevitch and Lucas Stanczyk argue that there is a "basic income illusion" that blinds advocates, and as the authors demonstrate, their responsibility is to concretely demystify this illusion for what it is.¹⁸ Likewise, Daniel Zamora suggests that a universal basic income is an irrational demand, and claims that it is an idea "formulated in complete abstraction from the existing world and real people" as a kind of non-realist political philosophy.¹⁹ While the content of these critiques are basically correct, the mischaracterization of the demand for a basic income becomes a category mistake for a revolutionary strategy.

To clarify this point, it is helpful to situate fetishized objective thought-forms within Gramsci's notion of "common sense." According to Gramsci, common sense involves the inherently unsystematic and incoherent assemblage of truisms and popular knowledge, which is both heterogeneous and contradictory while also relatively rigidified.²⁰ Common sense is both the site where ideological state apparatuses from above exploit incoherencies from below and insert new ones. But within common sense there also resides good sense, which Gramsci argues is the healthy nucleus of common sense. Good sense is characterized by an "experimentalism" and a "direct observation of reality, though empirical and limited" since it is undialectical.²¹ Although Gramsci did not seem to show much interest in fetish-forms, it is logical to argue that fetishized objective forms make up a part of good sense, since they are both empirical and proto-ideological insofar as they are not regulated from above by ISAs until after their expression.²²

If the state fetish-forms a part of good sense, this has implications for labor organizing strategies. In her 2011 book *Common Sense: An Intellectual History*, Sophia Rosenfeld argues that organic intellectuals must pluck those moments of good sense like gold nuggets from the river of common sense and insert them directly into progressive political narratives.²³ However, as Kate Crehan rightly argues, Rosenfeld overlooks the complicated dialectical relationship between good sense and coherent political philosophies that can re-organize common sense.²⁴ Gramsci actually argues that moments of good sense require elaboration and cultivation by organic intellectuals who can put those moments into a dialectical relationship with other concepts. Furthermore,

organic intellectuals do not exist simply as autonomous individuals that produce knowledge. Rather, organic intellectuals are members of political organizations that produce knowledge together. In other words, organic intellectuals become organic through their connection to political organizations that struggle to become a historical force on the terrain of economic production.²⁵

Therefore, formulating a successful revolutionary narrative requires moving beyond various critics of basic income's wooly commitments to a socialist politics. After his demolition of the impossible economics behind universal basic income, Zamora concludes that we should "reconnect with the postwar period's emancipatory heritage,"²⁶ while Gourevitch and Stanczyk similarly finish their piece arguing that socialists need to "build a new working-class consciousness."²⁷ These seem like obvious points that socialists can broadly agree upon and yet there is no clear rhetorical strategy or narrative for how to accomplish this within a political organization. Indeed, the question boils down to a double bind regarding the state's position in relation to basic income: what kind of narrative can encapsulate both the necessity for a demand for a basic income from the capitalist state, while acknowledging the realities of the limitations of the capitalist state to offer a universal basic income, thus necessitating the historical negation of the said state?

By way of a conclusion, I propose that one answer to this question regarding the absolutely necessary and yet woefully inadequate proposal for a basic income is to take the state wage, as an objective thought-form that makes up an aspect of good sense, and put it in rhetorical motion with the concept of "surplus." I suggest this because surplus can function as a bridge between objective thought forms and revolutionary consciousness.

From the position of an objective thought-form, the source of funding for a state-wage/basic income payment plan comes from the state's garnishing of wages that have been earned as the price of their labor (rather than their labor power). Undoubtedly, this experience gives certain ideologists the pretext to incorrectly situate this "taxation as theft" as the fundamental cause of the misery of the people. Nonetheless, more generous accounts see taxation as a necessary pooling of wealth to help alleviate the misery of the people, even if it comes from wages earned as the price of one's labour. Therefore, in the redistribution of wealth via taxation there is an inherent acceptance that there is more wealth than necessary for survival being generated—a surplus if you will. Referring to a state-wage/basic income payment plan as a surplus wage or designating funding models to deliver a basic income as an economic surplus model illustrates that there is this pool of wealth generated in excess of what is necessary to live while detracting from the stigma that "income" must be earned through work. Certainly, in America social security is perceived to be more deserving as a social program than other welfare programs due to the former's relationship to work. Thus, it is not inconceivable that any proposed basic income program is dead on arrival since it easily lends itself to being framed as income for the "undeserving poor," much like the way current welfare programs are perceived by the public. However, the idiom of surplus avoids this problem. Indeed, Alaska's version of a state-based basic income—the Alaska Permanent Fund—refers payments to citizens as a "dividend" rather than an income, which has arguably helped maintain the popularity of the fund despite being a historically conservative state.

Once basic income as surplus is established, organic intellectuals could make a further iteration of surplus that could organize common sense dialectically to see where this wealth is generated. As mentioned above, the notion of a basic income reinforces the solipsistic notion of class being based upon individual income and personal consumption choices while continuing to hide the distinction between necessary labor and surplus labor. However, the introduction of the concept of surplus can lead to questions about

how a society produces more output than is consumed and where this surplus comes from, i.e. from exploitation in production. In essence, the objective should be to change the definition of class based on income to class qua surplus. Indeed, as Richard Wolff points out, it is capitalism's organization of the surplus that eventually negates movements towards egalitarianism based on wealth redistributions like the basic income, so it is control of the surplus that the Left must desire.²⁸

Furthermore, class qua surplus speaks to the current conjuncture in a way that is often ignored in critiques of basic income. Instead of fighting for a basic income, critics like Gourevitch and Stanczyk alternatively propose a general recommitment to building a new working-class consciousness using traditional tried-and-true methods like organizing in the workplace. Although this is common sense in the abstract, the current conjuncture is defined by an intensification of "unity-in-separation" that strongly mitigates against successfully organizing in the workplace. As Endnotes argues, unity-in-separation involves "people's interdependence on the market, which comes at the expense of their capacities for collective action."²⁹ As mentioned above, there has been a massive sectoral shift from industry to services under late capitalism. Consequently, Endnotes argues that service jobs—which are not prone to a mechanization that makes workers' jobs similar to each other—are becoming less homogenous and therefore making it harder and harder to form a collective class identity.³⁰ Thus, unity-in-separation intensifies since the extension of capitalist relations increasingly separates workers from each other with radically different labor conditions in services while they become increasingly dependent upon one another to survive.

However, linking surplus to basic income affords the opportunity to theorize the current conjuncture in terms of Marx's theory of surplus populations. According to Marx, a surplus population is defined as a group of workers without regular access to work (either partially, or wholly unemployed) and are surplus relative to the needs of capital's demand for labor.³¹ Furthermore, there are three main branches of the surplus population: floating (the recently unemployed); latent (the about to be unemployed due to sectoral or technological shifts); and stagnant (the irregularly employed).³² In light of the massive sectoral shifts to services occurring in the global economy, Endnotes argues that the stagnant surplus population is increasing significantly since it is in services where a large portion of the surplus population ends up, "particularly in the low-wage, super-exploited section and in the informal, self-exploiting section."³³ Indeed, this is the general explanation for the crisis in social reproduction that has promoted a demand for a basic income in the first place. Thus, the theory of surplus populations frames the present in a way that enables the Left to strategize according to the problems of the current conjuncture. In fact, any call to organize the workplace has to wrestle with this problem of surplus.

Finally, as Perry Anderson points out, while capitalist social formations are dominated by culture and thus require the kind of rhetorical shaping that can be conducted by organic intellectuals in order to form hegemony, they are ultimately determined by the coercive nature of the capitalist state.³⁴ Therefore, any socialist strategy must be prepared to confront the determinant role of violence exercised by the state when fighting for the kind of world that would make a truly universal basic income possible. This is not to advocate a romanticized unity of the surplus population from a horizontal movement into a decentralized multitude that will overthrow capitalism; on the contrary, the sheer diversity of surplus populations according to differential positions in relation to the labor process makes this task extremely difficult. And yet, we can still say that it is necessary to take literally Marx's definition of the surplus population as a "reserve army," albeit one that has not yet been disciplined and organized to oppose an inherently oppressive state

apparatus. Therefore, surplus as an organized, disciplined, revolutionary surplus is a necessary narrative move organic intellectuals ought to make to help form, and undergo the formation of, a hegemonic bloc. Undoubtedly, more work is required to further substantiate many of the claims made in this paper, but I hope that they nonetheless provide some starting points into rethinking socialist theory, strategy, and proposals for basic income.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 1990), 169. 
2. Karl Marx, *Value, Price, and Profit* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008), 61. 
3. Endnotes Collective, *Endnotes 4: Unity in Separation* (London: Endnotes, 2015), 155–157. 
4. Kathi Weeks and Anna Curcio, “Social Reproduction, Neoliberal Crisis, and the Problem with Work: A Conversation with Kathi Weeks,” *Viewpoint Magazine* 5 (2015), <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/social-reproduction-neoliberal-crisis-and-the-problem-with-work-a-conversation-with-kathi-weeks/>. 
5. Daniel Zamora, “The Case Against Basic Income,” *Jacobin* (2017), <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/12/universal-basic-income-inequality-work>. 
6. Peter Sloman, “Universal Basic Income in British Politics, 1918–2018: From a ‘Vagabond’s Wage’ to a Global Debate,” *Journal of Social Policy* 47, no. 3 (December 2017): 3. 
7. Ellen Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2005), 10–14. 
8. Justin Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1994), 124–129. 
9. Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2013), 59. 
10. David Wells, *Marxism and the Modern State: An Analysis of Fetishism in Capitalist Society* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), 49. 
11. Alex Gourevitch and Lucas Stanczyk, “The Basic Income Illusion,” *Catalyst* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 154. 
12. Zamora, *The Case Against Basic Income*. 
13. John Clarke, “Basic Income: Progressive Cloak and Neoliberal Dagger,” *Socialist Project – The Bullet*, April 4, 2018, <https://socialistproject.ca/2018/04/basic-income-progressive-cloak-and-neoliberal-dagger/>. 
14. Clarke, “Basic Income.” 
15. Marx, *Capital*, 557. 
16. Sloman, *Universal Basic Income*. 
17. Marx, *Capital*, 969. 
18. Gourevitch and Stanczyk, “The Basic Income Illusion.” 
19. Zamora, “The Case Against Basic Income.” 
20. Kate Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 46. 
21. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 328, 348. 
22. Indeed, in his seminal *Commodity Aesthetics, Ideology, and Culture*, W.F. Haug similarly proposed that fetishized objective thought-forms constitute part of the proto-ideological that congeals with ideological discourses in the meeting point of common sense. As argued in Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 50–51, 253. 
23. Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: An Intellectual History* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 189–190. 

24. Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 48. 
25. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, 148–149. 
26. Zamora, “The Case Against Basic Income.” 
27. Gourevitch and Stanczyk, “The Basic Income Illusion,” 176. 
28. Richard D. Wolff, “Marx’s Concept of Class,” *Monthly Review Online* (2018), <https://mronline.org/2018/03/28/marxs-concept-of-class/>. 
29. Endnotes Collective, *Endnotes* 4, 85. 
30. Endnotes Collective, *Endnotes* 4, 158–159. 
31. Marx, *Capital*, 784–785. 
32. John Bellamy Foster, Robert W. McChesney and R. Jamil Jonna, “The Global Reserve Army of Labor and the New Imperialism,” *Monthly Review* 63, no. 6 (November 2011), <https://monthlyreview.org/2011/11/01/the-global-reserve-army-of-labor-and-the-new-imperialism/>. 
33. Endnotes Collective, *Endnotes* 4, 286–287. 
34. Perry Anderson, *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Verso, 2017), 87. 

 [Bio](#)



David Zeglen

David Zeglen is a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies program at George Mason University. For his dissertation, he is researching the applicability of Trotsky’s concept of uneven and combined development as a theory of cultural globalization. He is currently co-editing a special issue of *Celebrity Studies* with Neil Ewen on right-wing populist celebrity politicians in Europe due out in 2019. He is also working on an article about the rise of Cultural Marxism as an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory in the United States.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Kimberly Klinger, "Species-Beings in Crisis: UBI and the Nature of Work," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.11>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)
Universal Basic Income

Species-Beings in Crisis: UBI and the Nature of Work

Kimberly Klinger

ABSTRACT Marx famously argued that labor, under capitalism, alienates humans from not only the products of their labor, but from their very nature. Further, capitalist labor presents a “double freedom” for the worker that is, of course, anything but free: the freedom to either work for an exploitative boss, or to refuse, and starve. UBI would seemingly allow for way out of such a conundrum, but would it also open the door to allow humanity to regain their status as “species-beings”? I explore the idea of UBI as presenting an opportunity for meaningful work and a subversion of the logic of capital. Does UBI indeed grant workers more freedom, or does it merely contribute to the continued denigration of social relations under capital?

At a time when, after wage stagnation lasting decades and the erosion of many social programs, working class people are living more and more precariously, it should come as no surprise that interest in the concept of a universal basic income (UBI) is rising. Here, I want to focus on UBI’s potential not as an economic intervention *per se* but on the ways in which it may illuminate how capitalist social relations have eroded humans’ relationship to meaningful work, using Marx’s concept of “species-being.”

Capitalist labor perverts the relationship between humans and the natural objects around them and “turns for them the life of the species into a means of individual life,” wherein work becomes only that thing one does to merely stay alive.¹

This alienation stands in stark opposition to Marx’s thoughts about human nature: that we are meant to engage in “free conscious activity” in order to actualize ourselves as human beings. Work is the distinctive capacity of the human species – what distinguishes us as “species-beings” – but capitalism perverts this desire, turning it from productive to consumptive.² I argue that the greatest strength of UBI is the ways in which it exposes this truth about capitalist social relations. UBI could, potentially, intervene in wage labor in such a way as to return humans to something closer to their essence by subverting the structure of waged labor. Its potential to expose the contradictions between classes and the function and nature of labor is strong, but so far, as a political tool, it has not lived up to its promise.

The idea of returning to a more productive species-life is creeping into cultural forms beyond the strict discussion of UBI. Sometime this past summer, I came across a photo posted to the Instagram account of the home décor magazine *Domino*. It looked like any other impossibly chic, contemporary living room—whitewashed walls; wood floors; soft, buttery, yet somehow still minimalistic leather chairs. But what caught my eye was a poster hanging near the French doors that read “My dream is to become a farmer, just a bohemian pulling up my own sweet potatoes for dinner.”³

Eyroll, gag. Do the bougie owners of that house really think that farm labor is that romantic and easy? Why would they hang such a message in their clearly very expensive

and comfortable home, one that was certainly not bought with the profits of farm labor?

Currently, as a great many of us in the United States order our necessities through our smartphones, whine when free two-day shipping isn't available, and think very little of the conditions of production, a fascination with handmade, artisanal objects, organically grown food, and a return to a "simpler time" (whenever that was) permeates pop culture, particularly in city centers. Jean Baudrillard has argued that in the postmodern city, "we are at the end of production": labor in the traditional sense has vanished, and has been surpassed by "the structural revolution of value."⁴ The city is a place of consumption, not production, "an immense centre for marshalling and enclosure where the system reproduces itself not only economically and spatially, but also in depth by the ramifications of signs and codes, by the symbolic destruction of social relations."⁵ While it is not altogether true that production has ceased to exist, it has largely moved to the Global South, so that in the American imaginary, it may as well have. Production has ceased to be necessary to understand social relations, though, of course, capital has not. Baudrillard argues that Marx's materialist account of the labor theory of value has been replaced with a structural law of value, wherein exploitation under capitalism has shifted from the sphere of production to that of consumption. Labor has collapsed into consumption, and, in a continuation of Adorno and Horkheimer, leisure time becomes a form of complex labor that reproduces labor power.⁶ Thus the idea of actually farming does not even really matter here; it is in consumption that the real work happens, and consumers are all too happy to make the choice to work for capital. The poster itself was most likely merely a consumer choice, reflecting a value system that can be bought for the right price at the right shop.

However, I nonetheless want to posit that the poster could also be generously read as a longing for work, for a reconnection to what capitalism has taken away from us. This sort of fantasy may well indeed speak to the estranged nature of labor in the current conjecture. The poster isn't a request to *be a farmer per se*; rather, it is a wish to engage in productive self-sustaining work, or "conscious life-activity," the kind of work that capitalist social relations deny us.⁷ Reading the poster in this way helps to make clear, I believe, the fundamental alienation of labor under capitalism, and the ways in which these relations further remove humans from their capacities as "species-beings."

Under capitalism, Marx argued, labor is not the satisfaction of a need in itself, but rather, a means to satisfy needs external of it. The product of labor is strictly material; labor produces only commodities, including the worker herself, and estranges the worker from the products of her labor. Even worse, while the worker produces "wonderful things" for the rich, from "palaces" to surplus value, he becomes more and more degraded and devalued.⁸ This is not only due to the wage disparity, but to what Marx outlines as the third aspect of estranged labor: self-estrangement.

Other modern theorists have echoed Marx's concern with the dissatisfaction humans feel with work: they work only because of the things it will get them, out of necessity, or for advantage. Giuseppe Rensi, B. F. Skinner, Randall Collins, and Sigmund Freud all "shared the conviction that behavior is an exchange process."⁹ Work was seen as a constraint imposed by "civilization," and one that brought humans great unhappiness. None of those thinkers, of course, attributed any of this to social relations under capitalism—even as they used telling phrases like "exchange process" to describe the dire situation. Perhaps if they had been following in the Marxist tradition, they would have chosen the word *labor* rather than work, since what they were describing was alienated and exploited work within capitalist social relations, a historical category, as opposed to work in a broader sense, an anthropological category.¹⁰

Marx introduces the term “species-being” to argue that the distinctively human activity is not, as many in the philosophical tradition have put forth, thought, but “conscious-life activity,” *productive* activity, “labor in accordance with ones own conscious deliberation.”¹¹ For Marx, work is a creative, fulfilling activity, the “life-activity” of humans. There exists for Marx no natural inclination against work; rather, work is at the heart of what makes humans human. Marx’s concept of “species-being” thus grounds his critique of capitalism.¹²

Philosopher Thomas Wartenberg argues that Marx was engaging in a radical reconceptualization of the philosophic tradition’s use of the idea of human essence, and one that democratizes, for it does not distinguish among the type of activity that one chooses to engage in but rather values productive activity for its own sake.¹³ Humans are meant to be producers, not consumers, Marx argues, and they are not meant to suffer in their work under the sway of their capitalist master. “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” But under capitalism, one’s labor “does not belong to his essential being,” and becomes a labor of “self-sacrifice, of mortification.”¹⁴ Labor estranges humans from themselves and from nature, and “turns . . . the life of the species into a means of individual life.”¹⁵ Our species-life, our essential nature, has now been left behind under social relations that degrade free and spontaneous activity, and the products of our labor, performed “under the dominion, the coercion and the yoke of another man,” now belong to someone else.¹⁶

The concept of a “work ethic,” particularly in the US, endures and ignores this perverted relationship. Its naturalization and divorce from historical circumstance has taken on a moral dimension. This ideology vilifies those who cannot work for a wage or appear to not work hard enough, such as those who “leech off the state” or who are stuck in dead-ends or majored in something useless like cultural studies. These people have apparently brought it on themselves thanks to their laziness and bad choices; meanwhile, labor has reached new heights of exploitation. Most workers aren’t considered employees, thanks to the dismantling of labor laws and the rise of the gig economy against a backdrop of neoliberalism and austerity. Many of these workers need assistance programs to fill in the gaps, putting pressure on an already under-taxed system (it is thus clear who is really leeching from the state’s coffers: Jeff Bezos, for one). Estrangement is at an all-time high as apps mete out paltry wages without benefits; the side hustle is the new normal. And this isn’t even to speak of the legalized slavery of, for example, the American prison or the Thai shrimp boat, or the ways in which capitalists profit from immaterial labor and debt. Globally, workers have less power and mobility than perhaps ever before, and wealth continues to consolidate and grow in the hands of fewer and fewer powerful elites. If there was ever a time to get out of the death trap of labor, this is it.

Now this of course would take a large-scale revolution and the seizing of the means of production—but we will leave that for another forum. Here we are focused on the usefulness of UBI in addressing the problems of material deprivation, and I want to question its utility in challenging the conception of labor under capitalism. I suggest that, fundamentally, the concept of a UBI makes clear the exploitative nature of wage-labor. This I believe I can say for sure: UBI reveals the ways in which some types of labor are degraded and thus un- or under-paid. But “making clear” is not the same as “dismantling,” and I want to further suggest that UBI may, unfortunately, allow for the prolonged preservation of capital-labor relations; thus, it would have little to no effect on the nature of work itself and the fulfillment of the worker’s desire for conscious life-activity.

Existing UBI experiments have not paid enough to divorce wage-labor from a decent standard of living. A recent VICE magazine exploration of basic income reveals that many of the recipients of a pilot program in Hamilton, Ontario, spoke of the ways in which the

payments helped to “cut the struggle,” but not eliminate it totally.¹⁷ UBI may thus only add to the degradation of labor. If UBI does not fundamentally alter social relations, then waged labor will continue on as it has and may even stagnate. Why would workers organize for more if their needs are met, and why would capitalists pay more when the state has stepped in? In fact, a UBI pilot program in Finland was designed to “see how a basic unconditional income affects the employment of unemployed people,” ensuring that wage-labor carries on as usual.¹⁸

UBI would thus also fall flat in helping to broaden our conception of work and in allowing us to live more fully as species-beings. If a worker is not feeling the stress and strain of covering their basic necessities, they could perhaps focus on the job for itself. The natural inclination to work may ensure that the worker finds fulfillment. But the job still exists within a capitalist framework; thus, the worker is still alienated from the products of her labor. And unfortunately, UBI, as it has so far been suggested and implemented, does nothing to alter these realities. Take the “Freedom Dividend,” a \$1000 monthly payment currently promoted by Andrew Yang, tech executive and 2020 presidential hopeful. Yang is concerned about a future nearly devoid of jobs as we have known them and argues for his UBI program because he “believe(s) that universal basic income is necessary for capitalism to continue.”¹⁹ Jordan Pearson, covering UBI programs for *Vice*, is clearly concerned that the UBI trials of today “not only fall painfully short of holding society-changing promise, but their failures could be used as cover for even more restrictive social programs.”²⁰ These trials pay just enough to keep people at the poverty line, thus forcing them to continue to work for companies who exploit them and deny them living wages. A UBI of this type will merely prop up current relations, and, as Yang hopes, allow capitalism—and estranged labor—to continue unabated.

As Shannon Ikebe has argued in *Jacobin*, “a basic income only addresses the question of distribution, while ignoring that of production. The kind of freedom from work—or freedom through work, which becomes ‘life’s prime want’—that an UBI envisions is, in all likelihood, not compatible with capitalism’s requirements of profitability.”²¹ UBI has the potential to shift the nature and meaning of labor by revealing its exploitative nature, and this may pave the way to a more just, full life. But it remains to be seen whether UBI puts pressure on the existing system or further contributes to its degradation.

Notes

1. Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 75. 
2. Thomas E. Wartenberg, “‘Species-Being’ and ‘Human Nature’ in Marx,” *Human Studies* 5, no. 2 (1982): 78–95. 
3. Available on Etsy for \$85; apparently, it is a Lenny Kravitz quote.
<https://www.etsy.com/listing/494422138/my-dream-is-to-become-a-farmer-just-a-farmer>. 
4. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 1993), 9; Martin Weinreich, “‘Into the Void’: The Hyperrealism of Simulation in Bret Easton Ellis’s ‘American Psycho,’” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 49, no. 1 (2004): 66. 
5. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 77. 
6. Tim Dant, *Critical Social Theory: Culture, Society and Critique* (London: Sage, 2003), 57. 
7. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 76. 
8. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 73. 
9. Curt Tausky, “Work is Desirable/Loathsome,” *Work and Occupations* 19, no. 1 (1992): 6. 

10. Olivier Frayssé, "Work and Labour as Metonymy and Metaphor," *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12, no. 2 (2014): 468. [D](#)
11. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 76. [D](#)
12. Wartenberg, "Species-Being," 83. [D](#)
13. Wartenberg, "Species-Being," 77. [D](#)
14. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 74. [D](#)
15. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 74. [D](#)
16. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., 78. [D](#)
17. Jordan Pearson, "Basic Income is Already Transforming Life and Work in a Postindustrial Canadian City," *Motherboard*, April 23, 2018,
https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/paxzv8/hamilton-canada-basic-income-pilot-future-work-v25n1. [D](#)
18. Jon Henley, "Money for Nothing: Is Finland's Universal Basic Income Trial Too Good to Be True?" *The Guardian*, January 12, 2018,
<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2018/jan/12/money-for-nothing-is-finlands-universal-basic-income-trial-too-good-to-be-true>. [D](#)
19. Kevin Roose, "His 2020 Campaign Message: The Robots Are Coming," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/10/technology/his-2020-campaign-message-the-robots-are-coming.html>. [D](#)
20. Jordan Pearson, "Basic Income is Being Set Up to Fail," *Motherboard*, May 2, 2018,
https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/qvxyqp/basic-income-is-being-set-up-to-fail. [D](#)
21. Shannon Ikebe, "The Wrong Kind of UBI," *Jacobin*, January 21, 2016,
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/universal-basic-income-switzerland-finland-milton-friedman-kathi-weeks/>. [D](#)

 [Bio](#)



Kimberly Klinger

Kimberly Klinger received her PhD from the Cultural Studies program at George Mason University in 2016. She received her Bachelors from Penn State University, majoring in Letters, Arts, and Sciences; and her Masters from George Washington University in Women's Studies with a focus on Media Theory. Kimberly lives and works in Washington, DC, and has taught at George Mason University and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.



Caroline West, "From Company Town to Post-industrial: Inquiry on the Redistribution of Space and Capital with a Universal Basic Income," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.12>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Universal Basic Income

From Company Town to Post-Industrial: Inquiry on the Redistribution of Space and Capital with a Universal Basic Income

Caroline West

ABSTRACT This paper considers what effects a universal basic income could have on disrupting social and economic inequality in the tensions of urban/rural divide. She frames her inquiry on the political economy of land and labor in the collapse of coal industry "company towns" and its structural aftermath in Central Appalachia.

According to an analysis of US census data by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia, by 2040 close to 70 percent of the US population will reside in only sixteen states with the vast majority of the population centralized in and around major urban areas.¹ A study by Bloomberg found that while urban centers are growing by close to a million acres each year, they still only comprise 3.6 percent of all land mass on the continental US. Yet, despite their small size, urban spaces are home to four out of five Americans and contribute to the majority of the country's GDP wealth.² Meanwhile, income inequality across urban and rural areas has been stratifying at a rapid pace for the past 40 years. The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession has not tempered the growth of income inequality; rather, it has intensified it.³

In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx argues that capitalism has naturalized a hierarchical division in the social and economic order with the "separation of town and country and to the conflict of their interests."⁴ Urban cities are treated as the valuable center of capitalist and intellectual labor, and rural areas are relegated to the peripheral, lesser valued physical labor. Thus, urban studies scholarship within the Marxist tradition has provided important contributions to address the issues of growing inequality in urban spaces including the rapid privatization of public spaces, gentrification, and rising housing costs, as well as the devastating environmental consequences of urban living.⁵ Geographer Neil Smith asserts that tackling the expansion of capital and inequality is not solely a social project but a "geographical project," grounded in the appropriation of labor and land.⁶ Through Marxist analysis, Smith examines what constitutes the "geography of capitalism" and its uneven development of geographic spaces of poverty and wealth, town and country, industry and agriculture. He posits that the uneven development of capital is not random or inevitable; rather, it "is the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital."⁷ Capitalism was built upon the social and economic divisions that proceeded it, but it has also continued to reshape our social and economic world systematically to suit its needs and interests for growth and profit on a global scale.

Urban living requires access to surplus products that make specific demands on the extraction of resources from the land and labor in its periphery, which David Harvey

argues is “a class phenomenon, since surpluses are extracted from somewhere and from somebody, while the control over their disbursement typically lies in a few hands.”⁸ In the US, the resources coming from Harvey’s “somewhere” include close to four hundred million acres of cropland growing food as well as feed, cotton, and biodiesel; over six hundred and fifty million acres of pasture, primarily for livestock; and over five hundred million acres of timberland that service the commercial lumber industry.⁹ The resources grown, raised, and extracted from the land are the raw materials used across all sectors of industrial production. The “few hands” that own the means of industrial production that convert the raw materials from the land into commodity form are a relatively few large, multinational corporations. Located inside and on the outskirts of cities as well as in rural America, workers in the factories, plants, mills, and mines produced goods that drove the economy and, after widespread unionization in the mid-twentieth century, provided access to the middle class for many workers. In the 1970s, US industrial production shifted in a few important ways: the spread of automation in industry led to mass worker layoffs and lost livelihoods, the effects of globalization encouraged companies to move production in search of cheaper foreign labor, and the regulatory changes to address environmental concerns stifled profit margins and pushed some industries to look for new forms of natural resource extraction. This widespread desertion by large corporate owners of their factories, mills, and mines in the newly prescribed post-industrial era in the US left workers who had been employed in those industries for decades in its wake.

In this essay, I frame my inquiry on the political economy of land and labor in the coal industry “company towns” in Central Appalachia. With the widespread closure of mines, automation of much of the production that remains, and the subsequent mass out-migration, I consider what effects access to capital through redistribution in the form of a universal basic income could have to disrupt Smith’s conception of the uneven development of capitalism as a geographic project of the appropriation of labor and land. Here, I define a universal basic income (UBI) as a periodic, unconditional, and individual cash payment that is neither means tested nor contingent on work. Further, I imagine a UBI that would cover the costs for the basic needs of life: a roof over your head, food in your belly, and clothes on your back. Modern capitalism in Appalachia is a history of the privatization and extraction of natural resources, labor oppression, and monopolistic political and economic power by industrial corporations which affected not only the direct industry workers but the livelihood of every community member. In principle, a UBI that covers basic needs could weaken private industry’s control over Appalachian labor power and enhance opportunities for more local control over the infrastructure of the region’s economy.

Today, land in Appalachia is mainly comprised of pasture for livestock, forest, and rural residential areas, the latter of which, according to the USDA land classification system, are of “low income value.”¹⁰ Prior to the industrial revolution in the 19th century, Central Appalachia, comprised of counties in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, was very isolated. This region was mostly populated by small-scale subsistence farmers whose social worlds were organized around networks of their extended family.¹¹ Because of the sloped mountains and challenging soil, agriculture in the region was very limited. However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, copper, lumber, coal, and railroad industries began to lay claim to the area. Industry scouts would go to the mineral rich areas and offer landowners cash for rights to the resources under their land. Speculators and industry giants bought up large swaths of land, quickly accumulating wealth and regional power. With the establishment of these industries, the region experienced large population increases as newly immigrated workers as well as freed slaves arrived. With the influx of people, the companies created communities for the new workers and their families, constructing houses, schools, stores, and hospitals. The coal companies owned a

majority of the homes and businesses, creating a “company town” economic system that largely served the interests of the company. The money flowed from the company through employees’ cash wages and “scrip” that would circle back into the company’s coffers through the employees’ payment of rents, commerce, and services.¹² As Appalachian studies scholar Helen Matthews Lewis explains, the region’s economic structure was in the control of outside industries that would exploit its labor and land resources.¹³ Lewis describes three distinct classes that developed as a result of the “company town” in Central Appalachia: the rural mountain people who remained isolated on their small subsistence farms, the industrial camp workers solely dependent on the industry, and the middle class professionals who lived independently in the urban centers of the region. Those with economic power also wielded the political power, which they “used to exploit the region’s natural wealth for their own personal gain” leaving the mountain people largely ignored and unprotected, mine workers reliant on their wages for their families survival, and all forced to function in a system not of their making.¹⁴ Therefore, Appalachians living in and around company towns experienced extraction in three main ways. First, the redistribution of land by way of the siphoning out of natural resources and the industrial ownership and development of the local commercial and residential infrastructure. Secondly, the redistribution of natural and produced commodities to outside, urban markets. Lastly, the redistribution of worker wages through payments of rent, commodities, and services back to companies as added revenue.

By the 1960s, the coal industry had advanced significantly, and production was booming; however, mechanization caused profound unemployment to a population dependent on the industry. The industries began to disinvest in the communities by closing down small shops and business, selling the homes to the unemployed miners who could afford them, or tearing down the homes that could not be sold. This resulted in a great migration out of the region. The industrial workers lost their middle-class livelihood and the already poor population in the region became further entrenched in poverty. In 1960, the Conference of Appalachian Governors was established to formulate a plan for tackling the economic challenges of the region across state lines. At their request, President Kennedy formed the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC), a state and federal partnership, to develop an economic development program for the region. The PARC’s report was published in 1964 under President Johnson and reiterated the separateness, the otherness of Appalachia, declaring in the opening section that “Appalachia is a region apart” that lies “between the prosperous Eastern seaboard and the industrial Middle West.”¹⁵ This distance marked the poverty of Appalachia as distinct from other rural areas such as the Midwestern states. The report provides sobering statistics on unemployment, income gaps in spending and saving, educational deficits, housing values, and life expectancies that place urban and rural Appalachia well below the average in the rest of the country. The report makes only a timid effort to address the history of the natural resources that had been extracted out of the region by industry. Without a robust context on systemic capitalist dysfunction in the region, the final program recommendations were based on the idea that a “solution can come about only with the full engagement of the free enterprise potential in this large region so rich in human and natural resources.”¹⁶ Therefore, the report’s recommendations for further and continued extraction of local land and labor by private capitalist enterprises failed to recognize that these practices were instrumental to the creation of rural Appalachia’s post-industrial social and economic landscape.

James Sundquist of the Department of Agriculture, who served on the 1960s War on Poverty Task Force, noted the challenge of selling rural poverty reforms to policymakers and the public. According to Sundquist, the broader view in policy circles as well as in mass media narratives was that since rural populations had been rapidly shrinking due to

urban migration, there was little reason to pour federal dollars into these communities. Instead, the solution would be to continue to move the rural poor to the cities and deal with them there.¹⁷ Government initiatives to develop rural areas were seen as symbolic “gestures,” not serious interventions. Rural Appalachia is “looked on as backwaters. The people who live there are looked on as unenterprising and hardly worth saving, because if they had gumption, they’d get up and leave.”¹⁸ Sundquist argued that the conflation of rural poverty and migration was a “confusion of cause and effect, that they were withering away because they do not have basic public services,” a trend, he countered, that would reverse if an infrastructure was in place.¹⁹ This political narrative indicted rural people as nothing more than their poverty, and moreover, that they were explicitly to blame for their own poverty. The infrastructure that the state and federal government had inherited was created by the logic of private enterprise, exemplified by the development of coal company towns.

A half a century later, this narrative has slowly begun to shift. As census data points to continued urban population growth, a combination of pressure on urban housing, affordability, and the lingering employment effects of the 2008 recession could be part of the impetus for this changing narrative. As availability of urban and suburban space tightens, policy rhetoric has deviated from moving rural folks out to reintroducing capital investments back in. Congress has recently renewed the Abandoned Mine Land Pilot Program, which provides twenty-five million dollars in state funding for the cleaning and repurposing abandoned mines for economic development. Yet to move out of Congressional committee votes, The RECLAIM Act would expand the pilot program and disburse the one billion dollars in the Abandoned Mine Land Fund over a five-year period. One of the cosponsors of the bill, Representative Morgan Griffith from Virginia, spoke of the bill’s bipartisan support and the effect it could have on diversifying the local economies and providing people with the opportunity to stay in the region: “It’s Democrats and Republicans coming together to identify a way that we can be helpful, help the country, help make the environment better, help create jobs and [help] people who are skilled but want to stay living in the mountains be able to stay there and pursue something different as we move forward in this country.”²⁰ With the funds, abandoned mines and flattened mountaintops could be converted into natural energy farms for wind or solar power, and polls indicate that 89 percent of Appalachians on both sides of the political aisle support the RECLAIM Act.²¹ If these funding programs are committed to building the local economies from the bottom up, they could have profound impacts on diversifying land and labor opportunities. However, this sympathetic reading of legislation as conceived through progressive ideals does not align with the historic treatment of Appalachians in coal mining towns. Just as an example, Kentucky Congressman Harold Rogers’ current idea to secure more jobs to Letcher County is to build a new \$444 million prison.²²

Actualizing a bottom-up approach to economic development in Central Appalachia would need to be grounded in the cultural traditions that proceeded industrial production, namely, the strengths of community and familial relationships that can be used as a counter-weight to class stratification. Despite all the challenges Appalachian residents face with a crumbling infrastructure and few economic resources, the people in former coal mining towns have been imagining life beyond coal despite the lack of progressive governmental support. In a 2017 news video series produced by *Al Jazeera America*, Sana Saeed interviews residents in former coal counties in Eastern Kentucky to find that they are looking internally to their community ties in efforts to build a more diversified economy. Solidarity is being formed through social culture and identity and the labor of the community. Saeed interviewed Brad Shepard, a native of Eastern Kentucky, and his partner Daryl Royse. Shepard and Royse left behind city life and the corporate world in

Lexington to open the Heritage Kitchen in downtown Whitesburg. They do what they can support the local economy through their business practices, such as sourcing their food from local farms. The restaurant is thriving, and they are hoping to expand. Royse states that the people in the region are natural entrepreneurs who simply lack resources, “People here just need capital and funding and the ideas are here.”²³ For Shepard and Royse, they had to perform corporate labor in order to build the capital necessary to return to Whitesburg and open their business. In this anecdotal light, a UBI’s effect on diversity could be twofold: to create the conditions for local economic growth with less reliance on outside (and absentee) capital, In return, it encourages a diversification of the use of geographic space that would temper the stress put on urban areas.

I make no claim that, in isolation, a UBI has the ability to end all poverty or create the conditions to overthrow the capitalist mode of production. However, I believe it is fruitful to imagine how a UBI could fracture not only corporate monopolies over the economies of land and labor in coal counties, but also the demand on central Appalachians to leave for urban areas to procure a living. There are currently innovative initiatives beginning to transform the region, such as BitSource, a business founded by two Kentucky businessmen to teach former miners to write code. Based in West Virginia, Coalfield Development Corporation is a collection of five social enterprises that are building new economies in sustainable construction, renewable energy, agriculture, and arts and crafts enterprises. What is very clear about many of the constructive enterprises afoot in central Appalachia is the class dynamics still in play. These businesses remain steeped in the logic of capital, even if their drive is towards a more local and “ethical” capitalism.²⁴ If redistribution of capital through a UBI leveled the playing field, opportunities to reimagine a more diverse economy become tangible for Appalachian citizens extending beyond former coal miners and the already established business leaders and middle-class Appalachians.

Notes

1. Philip Bump, “In about 20 Years, Half the Population Will Live in Eight States,” *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/07/12/in-about-20-years-half-the-population-will-live-in-eight-states/?utm_term=.df7826ec3fd3; “United States Population: Weldon Cooper Center Projections of 50 States and DC,” Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, 2017, <https://uva-demographics.github.io/main-site/maps/library/us-population/>. 
2. Dave Merrill and Lauren Leatherby, “Here’s How America Uses Its Land,” *Bloomberg*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-us-land-use/>. 
3. See two reports from 2014 and 2017, respectively: Ben Casselman and Andrew Flowers, “Economic Inequality Continued To Rise In The U.S. After The Great Recession,” FiveThirtyEight, September 4, 2014, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/economic-inequality-continued-to-rise-in-the-u-s-after-the-great-recession/>; Rakesh Kochhar and Anthony Cilluffo, “How Wealth Inequality Has Changed in the U.S. since the Great Recession, by Race, Ethnicity and Income,” Pew Research Center, November 1, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/01/how-wealth-inequality-has-changed-in-the-u-s-since-the-great-recession-by-race-ethnicity-and-income/>. 
4. Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 150. 
5. Notably, Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); David Harvey, *Social Justice in the City* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1973); David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From*

the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution (London: Verso, 2013); Mike Davis, *Planet of the Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006); Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); and Setha Low and Neil Smith, ed. *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2005). 

6. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 237. 
7. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 3. 
8. David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review*, II, no. 53 (2008): 24. 
9. Merrill and Leatherby, "Here's How America Uses Its Land." 
10. Merrill and Leatherby, "Here's How America Uses Its Land." 
11. Helen Matthews Lewis and Edward E. Knipe, "The Colonialism Model: The Appalachian Case," in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 10. 
12. Scrip was the payment of wages in the form of a paper coupon or token that could only be exchanged for goods at the "company store," the town's one-stop shop for food and household supplies, which was owned and operated by the coal company. 
13. Helen Matthews Lewis, "Introduction: The Colony of Appalachia," in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978). 
14. Ronald Eller, "Industrialization and Social Change in Appalachia, 1880-1930: A Look at the Static Image," in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 39-40. 
15. Appalachian Regional Commission, "Appalachia: A Report by the President's Appalachian Regional Commission, 1964" (US Government Printing Office: Washington, DC, 1964),
<https://www.arc.gov/about/ARCAppalachiaAReportbythePresidentsAppalachianRegionalCommission1964> xv. 
16. Appalachian Regional Commission, 32. 
17. Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 119. 
18. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 120. 
19. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 120. 
20. Molly Moore, "Calls for Action on RECLAIM Act," *Appalachian Voices*, December 6, 2017, <http://appvoices.org/2017/12/06/calls-for-action-on-reclaim-act/>. 
21. Sana Saeed, "In Appalachia, Some Hope for a Future without Coal," *Al Jazeera America*, March 1, 2017,
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/appalachia-hope-future-coal-170223121859843.html>. 
22. "Press Release: Rogers Presses Deputy AG about Letcher Co. Prison," US Congressman Hal Rogers, June 13, 2017,
<https://halrogers.house.gov/2017/6/rogers-presses-deputy-ag-about-leetcher-co-prison>. 
23. Saeed, "In Appalachia, Some Hope for a Future without Coal." 
24. For example, Coalfield Development Corporation bills itself as a "family of social enterprises" serving West Virginians. They define a "social enterprise" as "a business that combines the compassion of the nonprofit sector with the efficiency of the for-profit sector." Coalfield Development, <http://coalfield-development.org/about-us/>. 

 [Bio](#)



Caroline West

Caroline is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at George Mason University. She holds a MA in Arts Administration and Policy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA in Photography from Arizona State University. Her research is focused on visual culture, political economy, and theories of race and gender. She is currently finishing her dissertation, *Picturing Capital: Mass Media and the Art of Visualizing Poverty*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Lindsey Macdonald, "We are All Housewives: Universal Basic Income as Wages for Housework," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.13>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)
Universal Basic Income

We are All Housewives: Universal Basic Income as Wages for Housework

Lindsey Macdonald

ABSTRACT This paper proposes to orient contemporary debates over universal basic income (UBI) to broader social theory in the Marxist and Marxist-feminist traditions. Drawing on theories of labor decommodification, market socialism, and social reproduction, as well as more public-facing debates over policy, the purpose of this analysis is to better clarify the stakes a burgeoning left politics might have in pursuing the demand for UBI. Following key justifications put forward by chief proponents of the Wages for Housework movement for pursuing seemingly impractical, impossible, and politically ambiguous demands, I argue that UBI is best treated as a political perspective with both reactionary and revolutionary undercurrents. Urging caution, not dismissal, I refute more conventional economic analysis leading to common refrains against UBI, and suggest possible ways to bend UBI toward more explicitly socialist aims.

Socialism seems to be making a comeback in American politics, although no one is quite sure what it means. There is perhaps no document more symptomatic of a general level of confusion surrounding the concept and history of socialism, though, than the recently published White House report, "The Opportunity Costs of Socialism." Within the first several pages, the authors give a lengthy explanation on how "spending someone else's money" (and even spending "your money" on someone else) causes inefficiencies,¹ and then proceed to "show" how inferior growth rates in the Soviet Union and lower cancer survival rates in the EU are both part of the same pernicious phenomenon. These bizarre parallels are accompanied by others, ranging from the implication that Vladimir Lenin and Elizabeth Warren share a similar set of political commitments, to the notion that Mao's Great Leap Forward and Bernie Sanders' Medicare-for-All come from the same bucket of socialist policy ideas. According to the US Council of Economic Advisors, socialism encompasses everything from Soviet agricultural policies to high taxes on pickup trucks in Finland and other Scandinavian countries.

Throughout the report is a repeated emphasis on a particular fetish of economists: gross domestic product (GDP). The authors, for example, predict that GDP would fall by 9 percent, or about \$7,000 GDP per capita, if Medicare-for-All were financed through higher taxes.² While GDP tends to be presented as the simplest proxy for the overall health of the economy, this usage tends to obfuscate what GDP measures and what can cause it to go up or down. Many policy analysts have taken to task the profound deficiencies in using GDP as indicator of a nation's well-being and prosperity. As Mijin Cha at Demos writes, GDP "cannot distinguish between a positive economic indicator, like increased spending due to more disposable income, and a negative economic indicator, like increased spending on credit cards due to loss of wages or declining real value of wages."³ Rather, GDP measures "raw economic activity," without any judgement as to whether that activity is beneficial to society. In the case of Medicare-for-All, a decline in GDP per capita isn't just likely, but desirable, as it would largely reflect a decline in healthcare costs.

Our relationship to the economy today is mediated by a whole host of obfuscatory metrics, behind which lie specific class interests. While other development indices contain their own implicit set of normative claims, GDP has become uniquely aligned with the interests of the capitalist class. It includes a litany of “products” that likely many people would rather be rid of, such as the 6.5 percent of global GDP spent on subsidizing fossil fuels,⁴ or the 3.1 percent of national GDP spent on defense.⁵ It also excludes other products that probably should be included, but aren’t, like education and household labor. These are also economic activities in the sense that they produce and reproduce human labor power, but they’re excluded. The CEA’s report begins with the dire warning: “Replacing US policies with highly socialist policies, such as Venezuela’s, would reduce real GDP at least 40 percent in the long run, or about \$24,000 per year for the average person.”⁶ It’s not immediately apparent that anything like this would happen, or that it would have much to say about the “average person’s” living standards if it did. Although GDP per capita tracks closely to income per capita, environmental degradation, income inequality, loss of leisure time, and other factors can reduce living standards even as per capita income remains steady or increases over time.

Looking to alternative measures of a society’s overall well-being and prosperity, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) or the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), is one clear step socialists can take toward evaluating more carefully which policies and programs align with working class interests by focusing attention to what actually matters: the transformation of the economy into one that focuses on human need, rather than exchange. One such potential program is a universal basic income (UBI), which has gained traction since the 2008 financial crisis. Its financing matters, but it’s the structure of that financing that’s likely to determine its usefulness to any socialist project, rather than raw cost.

Consequently, this paper attempts to orient contemporary debates over UBI to broader social theory in the Marxist and Marxist-feminist traditions, which perceive the economy as a continual process of transformation of nature and society by production. Capitalism, as a specific mode of production, acknowledges productive labor for the market as the sole form of legitimate work, while the work that goes into sustaining and replenishing the workforce is naturalized into nonexistence. In contrast, social reproduction theory (SRT) perceives the relation between labor dispensed to produce commodities and labor dispensed to produce people as part of the systemic totality of capitalism. The contradictory entanglement of these labors serve as the basis of SRT, which analyzes the ways in which the production of human labor power and the production of surplus value “inhere in an integral and non-reducible logic of social reproduction.”⁷

Whereas Marx revealed the centrality of class exploitation by leaving the cash nexus and entering the “hidden abode” of production, SRT focuses attention to social reproduction as a prerequisite to the labor force and therefore all capitalist production.⁸ This shift in perspective can help clarify more precisely what wages obscure: indeed, the social relations between wage-labor and capital, but also the social relations between waged and unwaged workers. The relationship between these sets of social relations, as Sarah Ferguson argues, is both necessary and contradictory: necessary because capital requires human labor, which itself must be produced, and contradictory because human needs must be subordinated to the imperatives of accumulation. As a result, capitalists must “constrain and control the wages and social spending that pay for the renewal of the workforce.”

Drawing further on theories of labor decommodification and market socialism, as well as more public-facing debates over policy, the purpose of this analysis is to better clarify the stakes a burgeoning left politics might have in pursuing the demand for UBI. I argue that

UBI is best treated as a political perspective with both reactionary and revolutionary undercurrents. Urging caution, not dismissal, I suggest possible ways to bend UBI toward more explicitly socialist aims.

In the socialist perspective, UBI tends to serve as vehicle for highlighting the more radical dimensions of the welfare state, in particular its capacity to decommodify labor power. This position relies on an understanding of capitalism that emphasizes the subordination of all economic activity to a specific set of systemic imperatives that workers and capitalists alike must conform to in order to survive: the imperatives of competition, accumulation, profit-maximization, and increased labor productivity.² These imperatives in turn form the basis of an impersonal system of exploitation that locks workers and capitalists into a relationship of mutual dependence and antagonism, mediated by the market: capitalists depend on the market to purchase both means of production and labor power, while workers must sell their labor power to capitalists via the market to gain access to the means of their own reproduction. Workers may choose between capitalists, but they must choose one. In this context, UBI runs parallel to other universal programs that reduce labor's dependence on the market. Simply put, if people can procure their basic necessities without having to exchange their labor power for wages, the power of capitalist bosses to dictate the terms of employment diminishes sharply. UBI accomplishes this shift in power dynamics by providing a regular source of income that doubles as a "unconditional and inexhaustible strike fund."¹⁰

The socialist argument in favor of UBI is grounded in a rich body of Marxist social theory that posits commodification as one of the central structuring problems of life under capitalism. In his comparative analysis of welfare systems across Europe and North America in *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, for instance, Gøsta Esping-Andersen attempted to measure a particular program's potential for labor decommodification, defined as the degree of market independence it afforded the average worker.¹¹ Although his resulting typology remains contested in the field of comparative social policy due to its reliance on ideal types that do not map seamlessly onto the complexities of actually existing welfare states, what concerns us here is the primary distinction he draws between the organizing principles of liberalism and social democracy in the realm of state-led social provision. Whereas the liberal welfare state, he argued, "[grants] the cash nexus a hegemonic role in the organization of social and economic life," the social democratic welfare state attempts to emancipate workers from market dependency by establishing "various schemes that permit employees to be paid while pursuing activities other than working."¹² Broadly speaking, UBI can be assimilated into either of these two models, shoring up market dependency, or alternatively, reducing it.

Historically, the aspirations of social democracy have had a fraught relationship to Marxism. However, Esping-Andersen's typology provides at least some indication of where UBI might sit in relation to the broader socialist project. For those who object to the compulsory nature of the capitalist labor market, UBI is appealing because it holds the promise of establishing the material basis needed to make freedom a lived reality. On the grounds that UBI would provide people with "real freedom" to choose how to spend their time, Philippe Van Parijs argues that establishing a UBI would constitute "a profound moral reform that belongs in the same league as the abolition of slavery or the introduction of universal suffrage."¹³ More optimistically, Van Parijs contends that with this freedom, UBI might serve as the basis for eliminating wage-labor entirely.¹⁴ With workers no longer forced to take on "unrewarding, undesirable work" for low wages, capitalists would be compelled to pursue labor-saving technologies and organizational change much more aggressively. Meanwhile, wages for "intrinsically rewarding work" would trend downward—initially, as a result of the wage-subsidizing effects of UBI, but

also because the cost of living would gradually diminish as the “drudgery required per unit of product” declined. The distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom would, in other words, wither away.

On its surface, Van Parijs’ position seems to assume the level of basic income would be high enough to eliminate the need to work for wages. Otherwise, people would still be required to sell their labor power, and the emancipatory potential of UBI would seemingly disappear. It’s difficult to imagine, in other words, the widespread refusal of “undesirable work” if the UBI were not, as a fundamental precondition, set at the level of subsistence. And yet, Van Parijs states that a basic income need not necessarily be “sufficient to cover basic needs,” and makes few exceptions for other forms of social provision on the assumption that recipients would in almost all instances prefer cash.¹⁵ Moreover, his belief that UBI offers a “capitalist road to communism” rests on the highly optimistic assumption that “drudgery” is necessarily amenable to automation or significant organizational restructuring, despite ample empirical evidence to the contrary. Highly feminized sites of care work, for example, have proven remarkably resistant to even the most apocalyptic narratives surrounding near-term advancements in automation technology. At present, care work, and low-wage care work in particular, is projected to be one of the largest sectors of job growth in the coming decades.¹⁶

The version of basic income we get will depend on the political forces that shape it, and UBI is by no means strictly an argument from the left. As Adam Greenfield observes, UBI already constitutes a “market-friendly reframing” of what socialists used to call a social dividend.¹⁷ Popularized by market socialists in the twentieth century, the social dividend became a key feature in models of market socialism characterized by publicly owned enterprises operating to maximize profit within a market economy.¹⁸ Within this model, the social dividend would grant every citizen a share of the income generated by publicly owned assets and natural resources. This is essentially the model of the Alaska Permanent Fund (APF), which pays its residents a dividend out of income generated by a state-owned mutual fund. The model would in part transform the state. Indeed, Marx himself advocated something like a social wealth fund, suggesting in his manuscripts that “an equality of wages paid out by the communal capital” would constitute a “crude communist” first step towards ending alienated labor.¹⁹

The APF offers key insights into how a UBI might be realistically implemented and paid for, including at a much larger scale and amount. However, some of its most vocal and visible supporters elide these crucial details. “First, it’s funded by natural resources rather than raising taxes,” wrote Facebook cofounder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg in a widely circulated Facebook post.²⁰ “Second, it comes from conservative principles of smaller government, rather than progressive principles of a larger safety net,” he added. While not inaccurate, Zuckerberg’s depiction of the APF is an oversimplification on both points. Although supported by royalties and fees paid to the Alaska state government for the extraction and sale of natural resources, this revenue is not directly transferred to Alaskan residents. Rather, this revenue forms the principal of the APF, while the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) is indexed to a portion of returns on investments made by the state. The state, in other words, acts as a holder of interest-bearing capital.

Interest-bearing capital is usually associated with private individual investors, but the state of Alaska has partly taken over this function. Marx describes the owner of interest-bearing capital as a private individual who turns his capital over to a third party, “who throws it into circulation, turns it into a commodity as *capital*; not just capital for himself, but also for others.”²¹ When a state takes over this function, capital accumulation continues, but a growing share of the surplus value accrues directly to the state and out of the hands of private capitalists. Complicating matters further, many Alaskan residents

“view the PFD as a distribution of income from assets owned by individual citizens rather than as an appropriation of government.”²² Zuckerberg is therefore also correct to suggest the APF is based on neither liberal nor conservative principles, but this is in large part due to its peculiarity in the American context and the tendency of most sovereign funds to conform to their specific political and cultural context (both Norway and Saudi Arabia have one, for example). As socialist policy analyst Matt Bruenig explains, “what’s actually going on in Alaska is a kind of market socialism . . . It’s a way to socialize the ownership of capital resources without centrally planning anything or otherwise disrupting normal market operations.”²³ Predictably, Bruenig’s emphasis on the APF’s compatibility with market socialist principles has drawn the ire of more conservative writers, for whom capitalism is compulsively associated with “free markets,” and the idea of a Republican governor implementing anything resembling a socialist program is virtually unthinkable.²⁴ But this is effectively what happened in 1976, and the program has since become so thoroughly naturalized that Alaskan residents accept it as little more than a perfectly normal and self-evident fact of life.

Difficulties emerge, however, when comparing the projected cost of a more generous social dividend program at the national level to the revenue generated through energy royalties and related fees paid to the federal government, which only bring in around \$12b annually.²⁵ Granting a social wealth fund ownership of this revenue stream and virtually all others derived from physical assets—buildings, intercoastal waterways, infrastructure projects, and the electromagnetic spectrum—would generate a dividend worth only a few hundred dollars per year.²⁶ Hillary Clinton, after entertaining such a program during her 2016 presidential campaign, concluded the amount paid out would be too stingy. Since a more ambitious sum would require “new taxes or cannibalizing other important programs,” she abandoned it.²⁷ Admittedly, her assessment isn’t wrong. Only the left doesn’t object to the former, and the right is counting on the latter.

Bruenig proposes establishing a UBI in the specific form of a social dividend, but any close engagement with his work reveals that he is centrally preoccupied with the transformative potential of the fund that would finance it. In his recently published “Social Wealth Fund for America,” Bruenig proposes, in addition to ring-fencing existing federal assets, a sweeping array of new taxes on private wealth, raising taxes on gifts and inheritance, and eliminating existing tax breaks on private savings to drum up the initial amount. More importantly, though, Bruenig proposes permitting the fund to *vote its shares*, enabling its managers to exert vast influence over the conduct of private firms. While the prospect of letting a large state-owned fund vote its shares is sure to draw significant criticism from liberals and conservatives alike, its prospects raise crucial questions of governance for socialists. Bruenig endorses a model roughly similar to the APF, where the fund would operate largely independently, but under broad guidelines set by Congress and the US Treasury. Alternatively, Peter Gowan, a fellow with the Democracy Collaborative, proposes a model more closely resembling the Swedish Meidner Plan, in which multiple social wealth funds, constructed along sectoral lines, are “managed by boards composed of many relevant groups tailored to each one.”²⁸ In either scenario, a portion of the dividends resulting from investments would be allocated to citizens, while the remainder would be reinvested, along with new tax revenue. Pursued with enough gusto, such a program could very rapidly expand state ownership of capital. Moreover, if institutional oversight took the form of workers councils or “many relevant groups,” the result would be very close to a functional dictatorship of the proletariat.

What emerges from any kind of sustained engagement with the political economy of UBI is not a shared vision of simply giving people money, but intractable differences of political perspective. Despite heavy promotion of UBI on the basis of its cross-ideological appeal,

fundamental disagreements begin to surface the moment it moves from normative demand to concrete social policy. Whereas Bruenig and Gowan share in a desire to prefigure the foundations for a rationally planned and democratically controlled economy, this is hardly what tech billionaires and libertarians have in mind. Rather, proponents on the market right clearly anticipate UBI as a pretext to do away with what remains of existing government programs and benefits, laying the groundwork for further privatization and advancement of capitalist class interests. While frequently obscured by a repeated, happy emphasis on spurring entrepreneurial creativity and innovation, support for UBI among Silicon Valley's cadre of venture capitalists is predicated on the assumption of shoring up market dependency, rather than reducing it. As Chris Hawkins, an investor who made his fortune creating software that automates office work, insists, "the cost has to come from somewhere," and for him, "the most logical place to take it from is government-provided services."²⁹ On this point, Elizabeth Rhodes, a researcher with Y Combinator—a startup planning to conduct a five-year UBI trial beginning in 2019—is also forthcoming: "The motivation behind the project is to begin exploring alternatives to the existing social safety net."³⁰

One of the more extreme iterations of this version of UBI can be found Charles Murray's recent book, *In Our Hands*, which advocates replacing the entire welfare system in the United States with a tax rebate of \$13,000 per year to every American adult.³¹ He is explicit in his plan for financing such a program: "[get] rid of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, housing subsidies, welfare for single women and every other kind of welfare and social-services program, as well as agricultural subsidies and corporate welfare."³² Acknowledging that this program would still be expensive, he argues that it would nonetheless reduce federal spending over time in light of projected increases in the cost of certain services, such as healthcare. In short, people would receive less government assistance than they do now.

While difficult to draw a straight line from Murray's endorsement of UBI to that of Hawkins or Rhodes, all share in a vision of UBI as an "alternative" to existing programs, rather than a supplement. Notoriously hostile to unions and labor regulations of all kinds, tech billionaire support for UBI would almost certainly vanish if the preferred method of financing it were something like compulsory contributions of voting shares from capitalist firms to collectively-owned funds overseen by some combination of workers councils, consumer protection boards, environmental groups, and the like. Likewise, social wealth fund advocates and post-work partisans would likely recoil from any plan predicated on dismantling all other forms of social welfare and replacing it with just enough cash to clear the poverty threshold. Far from indicating a potential site of rational compromise or even spirited debate, UBI exists firmly in the idiosyncratic space of the utopian demand. As Fredric Jameson observes, "what these utopian oppositions allow us to do is, by way of negation, to grasp the moment of truth of each term."³³

Best known for his previous books, *The Bell Curve* and *Losing Ground*, Murray has had tremendous influence on American social policy. Bill Clinton's domestic policy agenda to "end welfare as we know it" was partly inspired by Murray's *Losing Ground*, which admonished the federal government for creating policies that fostered a "culture" of poverty and dependency. Despite deep and well-documented methodological flaws in Murray's analysis, the subsequent shift from welfare to "workfare" was principally achieved through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which ushered in new work requirements, caps on benefits, and the ability of states to exclude people with felony drug convictions.³⁴ Predictably, this reduced the number of welfare recipients, and for a time seemed to reduce poverty overall, but it did so at the expense of deepening some of the most extreme forms of economic deprivation.

The number of “disconnected mothers”—individuals who receive neither wages nor welfare—doubled between 1990 and 2005,³⁵ while the number of American households living on \$2 per person, per day, skyrocketed.³⁶

In Murray’s view, wealth and social power naturally accrue to high-IQ individuals, while those on the lower end of the eponymous bell curve form an “underclass” whose poverty stems from their low intelligence. Criticisms of *The Bell Curve* have typically centered on its racist overtures, but as Barbera and Karen E. Fields point out, *The Bell Curve* is “far more centrally a class-and-IQ book.”³⁷ In its most basic formulation, Murray and Herrnstein’s central argument in *The Bell Curve* is this: labor markets no longer reward the less smart, and any intervention on the part of the state will only make the situation worse. This thesis is laid out even more explicitly in *Coming Apart*, where he claims the rich have grown richer because of “the increasing market value of brains.”³⁸ Only his focus has shifted in *Coming Apart* to the “white underclass,” which, as it turns out, is virtually indistinguishable from its black counterpart. Neither book has much to say about women in their capacity as workers, either.

In *Losing Ground*, the omission of labor force participation rates of black women in particular is especially glaring, as legal scholar Edward Mattison observes: “Murray chooses to focus only on the situation of a particular segment of the poor, namely black males between the ages of 16 and 24. He then uses the experience of this group to generalize about poverty as a phenomenon.”³⁹ Murray never bothers to consider how black households were systematically structured by the state’s two-tiered strategy for managing the reproduction of working class, the crisis brewing at the heart of that strategy, and its subsequent fallout. When black workers migrated to the North and West decades earlier, many lost extended family ties and kin support, making it harder to survive. Some black proletarians did find stable work in clerical settings, auto factories, and ship docks, but breadwinner wages and generous entitlements were out of reach for most. Instead, many black proletarians found themselves in low-skill, intermittent employment, and subject to a “confiscatory premium” that capital extracted from racialized labor.⁴⁰

With the dynamic expansion of the world economy between the 1940s and 1970s a combination of high wage growth, relatively high costs of production, and relatively low profitability in US manufacturing gradually yielded fewer and fewer opportunities for profitable investment.⁴¹ When manufacturing firms began restructuring under mounting global competition, black workers were hit first and hardest. As Laura Renata Martin writes, “black proletarians in urban industrial centers, were ‘super exploited’ or ‘hyperexploited’: made to function as the most flexible and expendable portion of the working class, the portion made to pay the price for the inevitable volatility of market forces, being hired and fired at will, having wages lowered at will, and productivity increased at will.”⁴² Moreover, while the expanded welfare state redistributed large amounts of wealth to mostly white and male workers and their families, black families typically received much smaller and stigmatizing transfers through state programs. The combined pressures of un- or underemployment and circumscribed access to redistributive mechanisms broke up many black families, leaving many black proletarian women as sole caretakers and wage earners within their households.

Black proletarian women were increasingly compelled into the workforce, often for very low pay, and at the expense of household work, family care, and their own leisure time. Some landed in the growing service sector, including temp agencies and other “pink collar” employment, where they came into contact with white, middle class women looking to escape the confines of domestic servitude. Still others organized around rights to welfare. While based on the more restrictive Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program enacted

in 1935 as part of FDR's New Deal reforms, the AFDC replaced in 1996 was the culmination of efforts of welfare activists to lift the decades-long exclusion of divorced women, single mothers, and women of color from receiving benefits.⁴³ Most of these gains were spearheaded in the 1960s by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO).

When Marxist feminists coalesced around the seemingly improbable and impractical demand of Wages for Housework in the 1970s, it was first and foremost an attempt to forge very different kind of class consciousness, suitable to these new historical circumstances. In contrast to liberal feminist currents at the time, largely content with the project of gaining entry to the paid workforce on the same terms as men, the Wages for Housework movement sought to demystify the extent to which people were not only dependent on the market, but also instrumentalized to its ends. The International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWHC) demanded a substantially reduced work week, a guaranteed income for all, and free community-controlled childcare. In her essay, "Wages Against Housework," Silvia Federici argues that these demands have the power to transform society "because it forces capital to restructure society in terms more favorable to us and consequently more favorable to the unity of the class."⁴⁴

It's often assumed that waged housework never came to pass, but it did in some small and important ways. In the late 1960s, the predominantly black women members of the NWRO showed up welfare offices demanding "special grants" for clothing, household items, and new furniture. If welfare officials refused, they would hold sit-ins and other protests until their demands were met. By overwhelming welfare offices with these requests, they hoped to put pressure on the welfare system and effect more fundamental change.⁴⁵ NWRO welfare activists also helped create WIC, and together with civil rights lawyers, successfully struck down the "man-in-the-house" rule, which allowed investigators to raid their homes to hunt for men to hold financially responsible for their families. Their efforts affirmed female-headed households, and the choice to stay home and care for their children. In defense of the work they performed in the home, NWRO activist Johnnie Tillmon wrote, "There are some ten million jobs that now pay less than the minimum wage, and if you're a woman, you've got the best chance of getting one."⁴⁶ She added, "the ladies of NWRO are the front-line troops of women's freedom. Both because we have so few illusions and because our issues are so important to all women—the right to a living wage for women's work, the right to life itself."

By the early 1970s, however, demands for special grants led to fewer material gains and membership began to decline. "Stagflation" started to set in, which meant for the first time in American history, wages and unemployment were rising simultaneously. All conventional economic theory, including Marx's, suggests this should have depressed worker power and organizing capacity. But the OPEC oil embargo set in motion a unique set of conditions, as did expanded welfare rights. In no uncertain terms, organized labor staged a massive offensive.⁴⁷ 40 percent of the workforce was involved in some strike action between 1967 and 1973, while the unemployment doubled in the same time frame. Ratio of quits to layoffs also increased to two to one, a trend partly enabled by reductions in welfare restrictions. The working class as a whole was starting to erode capital's ability to accumulate, forcing ever higher wages and in some cases, refusing work altogether.⁴⁸ Mexican American workers also made significant advances, winning important victory in 1975 when California required growers to collectively bargain with representatives from the United Farm Workers union. As Christian Parenti writes of the 1970s, "working-class power was being institutionalized within the state, and the state in turn was being transformed. But from the point of view of employers, welfare for strikers meant government-subsidized class war."⁴⁹

However, if the 1970s looked like a united front, deep rifts persisted and were easily exploitable as production sped up and work became more flexible and contingent. Industry leaders in the “temp economy,” for example, had been chipping away at the ideal of permanent, life-time employees since the 1950s—at first drawing white, middle-class women with the opportunity to earn “pin money” in their spare time, and later absorbing minority women as the demand for cheap labor that could be kept off the books increased with rising costs of production. As sociologist Erin Hatten writes, in the 1960s and 70s, temp agencies introduced “a revitalized and fully updated liability model of work,” casting permanent workers as drags on productivity.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, labor-saving computer technologies had been in the works for nearly as long, with Walter Reuther receiving a letter from Norbert Wiener in 1949 warning him that a leading industrial corporation wanted to build “an inexpensive small scale, high speed computing machine”—the effects of which could only be “disastrous” for employment.⁵¹ By the time GM rebuilt its plant in Lordstown, Ohio, in 1969, it did so with 24 spot welding robots—a move preceded by layoffs and resulting in dramatic speed-up of production for those who remained.⁵²

Referred to as a “cold bath” recession, the Vockner shock beginning in 1979 was devised to discipline the working class. Appointed to the head of the Federal Reserve by President Carter, Volcker told the *New York Times*: “The standard of living of the average American has to decline . . . I don’t think you can escape that.”⁵³ And decline it did. In an act of top-down market correction, Vockner boosted interest rates, cutting off borrowing and purchasing power. He hiked it again under Reagan, the country’s first MAGA president. A rapid series of tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation, an empowered police presence, and the introduction of onerous new restrictions on AFDC eligibility followed, along with reductions in food stamps, Medicaid, and other programs. Invasive searches of people’s homes resumed, this time looking for hidden assets instead of men, while welfare offices had their workers go through “violent incident training” in preparation for the cuts. In 1981, over a half-million families were cut off from AFDC or had their benefits reduced, while 875,000 families were dropped from the food stamp program.⁵⁴

Oddly enough, Murray now enough wants to see a UBI, and one that follows roughly the same logic as the AFDC. The AFDC provided cash assistance at a 100 percent phase-out rate, where each dollar earned meant one less dollar in benefits. Murray wants to increase the amount, provide it unconditionally to every American adult (children excluded), and decrease the phase-out to a 50 percent marginal rate. Given his plan for financing it, this would constitute, despite its seeming generosity, a wholesale abandonment of the American proletariat, which is increasingly female and predicted to be predominately people of color by 2032.⁵⁵ Some of the billionaires lining up behind similar schemes seem at least driven by some sense of *noblesse oblige*—or barring that, fear that the poor will start getting out their pitchforks, the flipside of the same underlying logic. Sam Altman, whose net worth is around sixty-five billion dollars and who has large stakes in AirBnB, Reddit, and Dropbox, professes a desire to repair the “fundamental breakdown of the American social contract.” His proposals, which include UBI, include many others that socialists may find appealing: higher taxes on non-owner occupied real estate and real estate used for speculation, public option health insurance, reallocation of a portion of defense spending to R&D for civilian purposes, and free college education in exchange for national service, among other ideas.⁵⁶

Any Left politics organizing from below should be wary and deeply skeptical of billionaire investors offering new social compacts. The last Fordist compromise ushered in a deeply uneven distribution of prosperity, in large part because it left social property relations untouched. Throughout its history, the reproduction of capitalist social relations has relied on the distinction between labor that is productive of surplus value and labor that is

not to deliver unwaged women workers to the domestic economy, while also ensuring a more flexible wage labor force for capital. By demanding recognition and payment for this work, the Wages for Housework movement sought to unsettle basic assumptions about the relationship between social reproduction and the productive economy, and in doing so, reveal the true length of the working day.⁵⁷ A generic UBI could have a meaningful impact on people's lives, so long as other programs aren't cut to finance it. However, it's benefits will be primarily limited to poverty reduction; a revolutionary program it is not.

In the 1970s, the Canadian government ran a five-year UBI experiment in the town of Dauphin, Manitoba, based on a program precisely of this sort. Designed to guarantee an income of \$19,500 for a four-person household, every dollar of labor market earnings reduced the guarantee by fifty cents.⁵⁸ This meant that payments phased out once household earnings reached around \$39,000. Over the course of the experiment, Dauphin experienced both rise in median income and a modest decline in labor force participation, principally among young and single-headed households.⁵⁹ While it may be tempting to interpret this as an unambiguous success, closer inspection of these outcomes indicate a few possible scenarios. A rise in median household income, if the result in a decrease in labor supply, might be evidence that some people, no longer dependent on the market for wages, voluntarily withdrew from the labor force to pursue other activities, thereby pushing up the wages of those who remained. But it could also mean that some people were pushed out of the labor market because they already disproportionately shouldered those forms of work *that aren't seen as work*.

Although this version of UBI tacitly proposes to compensate these various forms of unwaged labor, it also reinscribes their separation from the productive economy, further empowering capital to appropriate them as "free gifts."⁶⁰ This oversight persists across interpretations of the empirical evidence frequently given for UBI's efficacy, especially in providing workers with a "bargaining chip."⁶¹ David Calnitsky, who has researched UBI and the Dauphin "Mincome" experiment extensively, cautions against assuming that UBI would automatically form a subsidy to employers. But he does not consider how social reproduction has formed a permanent subsidy to capital for the entirety of its history, and that its contributions may not readily appear in prevailing wage rates.

At its core, the debate about UBI isn't about policy, but the foundations of our society. And similar to the demand for waged housework, one of the obstacles to having a clear discussion of UBI is a tendency to reduce it to a sum of money, instead of viewing it as a political perspective. In industrialized countries, workplace organization, labor regulation, and welfare policy all developed based on the model of the male breadwinner. Wages are therefore not only the primary mechanism by which income is distributed, but also the basic means by which work is allocated. A Marxist-feminist lens is crucial, therefore, to locating the ways UBI could intensify and exacerbate existing forms of gender oppression by effacing the centrality of gender and sex-based divisions of labor to the allocation of work in capitalist economies. At present, many arguments in favor of UBI operate on the assumption that robots are on the brink of ushering in mass technological unemployment, but as Federici observes: "While production has been restructured through a technological leap in key areas of the world economy, no technological leap has occurred in the sphere of domestic work significantly reducing the labour socially necessary for the reproduction of the workforce."⁶² Rather, this work has been partially externalized and waged, as well as shifted onto the immigrant "shock absorbers of economic globalization."⁶³

The low underlying rate of profitability of the 1970s pushed employers to make difficult decisions about how to survive in a global economy, and service sector employment skyrocketed. These two developments were not unrelated. Women were not only

working, but often for less than minimum wage and while shouldering the care burden at home. Meanwhile, traditional avenues of male employment deteriorated. The US is not yet out of this contradiction. Only, it is not service sector employment in general that's expected to expand in the coming decades, but the already feminized and racialized care sector. Many of these occupations, like home health aides, come with meager wages and are generally hidden away from meaningful regulatory oversight.⁶⁴ "Women's work," in other words, is creeping back into domestic sphere, through a combination of growing demand for low wage health workers (the result of an aging population), as well as growing work from home options, enabled by technology. If automation genuinely does produce something like a jobless economy in other sectors, the demand for alienated care labor may not be as acute as some economists predict. But in that case, that care burden will likely fall to family members, and in all likelihood, those family members will be women.

A better UBI is one based on the social dividend, due to its capacity to gradually transfer ownership of the economy to the state, while providing a modest stipend to all citizens. More importantly, though, a social wealth fund cracks open the field of possibility in a way that tax rebate versions of UBI do not, creating a communal war chest of the size and scope needed to transform any late capitalist society, with its massive firms and economies of scale, into a socialist one. Recoiling in horror at Bruenig's specific proposal for establishing a social wealth fund in the US, liberal pundit Kevin Drum estimates that it would take only around three decades before the federal government would have majority control of all publicly traded companies.⁶⁵ There are, of course, any number of reasons to prefer a more decentralized system of multiple funds ran by independent boards, or to object to mediating social ownership of the means of production through the equity form at all, but the social dividend offers a far more plausible "capitalist road to communism" than a tax rebate, which is easier to repeal.

To the extent that a UBI strikes at the heart of capitalism's reliance on an ocean of unpaid work, it poses a similar set of provocations as Wages for Housework. Made to pay the costs of reproducing life, capitalism would no longer be viable. But a UBI on the terms envisioned by libertarians should be flatly rejected, as should attempts to reconstruct the welfare state of twentieth century. As far as poverty reduction programs go, UBI may be salvageable. But if socialists wish to pursue a UBI with the power to fundamental alter social property relations, the social dividend remains the most promising because it can transform the state. The classical political economists, up to and including Marx, understood that capital was first and foremost the *command* over labor. More income to labor, however important it may be in the interim, must be accompanied by a broader vision of wresting control over the command of labor so that workers might one day command their own.

Notes

1. Council of Economic Advisors, "The Opportunity Costs of Socialism," White House, October 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Opportunity-Costs-of-Socialism.pdf>. 
2. Council of Economic Advisors, "The Opportunity Costs of Socialism." 
3. Mijin Cha, "What's Missing From GDP?" *Demos*, January 29, 2013, <https://www.demos.org/publication/whats-missing-gdp>. 
4. "Fossil fuel subsidies are a staggering \$5 tn per year," *The Guardian*, August 7, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/aug/07/fossil-fuel-subsidies-are-a-staggering-5-tn-per-year>. 

5. "Military expenditure as percentage of GDP in highest spending countries," *Statista*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266892/military-expenditure-as-percentage-of-gdp-in-highest-spending-countries/>. 
6. Council, "Opportunity Costs," 2. 
7. Susan Ferguson, "Social Reproduction Theory: What's the Big Idea?" Pluto Books, <https://www.plutobooks.com/blog/social-reproduction-theory-ferguson/>. 
8. Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capitalism and Care," *New Left Review*, 100 (July-August 2016): 100. 
9. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Politics of Capitalism," *Monthly Review* 54, no. 4 (September 2009), <https://monthlyreview.org/1999/09/01/the-politics-of-capitalism/>. 
10. Erik Olin Wright, "Basic Income as a Socialist Project," March 2005, <https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Basic%20Income%20as%20a%20Socialist%20Project.pdf>. 
11. Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 50. 
12. Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds*, 46–52. 
13. Phillip Van Parijs, "Competing Justifications of Basic Income," in *Arguing for Basic Income: Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform* (London: Verso, 1992), 7. 
14. Robert Van der Veen and Philippe Van Parijs, "A Capitalist Road to Communism," *Theory and Society*, 15, no. 5 (1986): 635–655. 
15. Van Parijs, "Competing Justifications of Basic Income," 4. 
16. "Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified June 11, 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home-health-aides-and-personal-care-aides.htm>. 
17. Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life* (New York: Verso, 2016), 204. 
18. James A. Yunker, "The Social Dividend Under Market Socialism," *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 48, no. 1 (January 1977): 91–133. See also Oskar Lange, "On the Economic Theory of Socialism," *The Review of Economic Studies*, 4, no. 1 (1936): 53–71; and James Meade, *Planning and the Price Mechanism: The Liberal-Socialist Solution* (New York: Routledge, 2013). 
19. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts and the Communist Manifesto* (New York: Prometheus Books), 99. 
20. Mark Zuckerberg, "Priscilla and I spent the weekend around Homer, Alaska," Facebook, July 5, 2017, <https://m.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10103857892105091>. 
21. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 2004). 
22. Scott Goldsmith, "The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend: An Experiment in Wealth Distribution," BIEN, 2002, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/ses/download/docs/gold.pdf>. 
23. Matt Bruenig, "A Spectre Is Haunting Alaska—the Spectre of Communism," *Demos*, January 5, 2014, <https://www.demos.org/blog/1/5/14/spectre-haunting-alaska%20%94-spectre-communism>. 
24. John Aronno, "Alaska's Permanent Fund Isn't Communism, It's the Owner State," *HuffPost*, January 13, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-aronno/alaska-permanent-fund-communism_b_4582603.html. 

25. "Energy Royalties." Royalty Exchange, 2018, <https://www.royaltyexchange.com/learn/energy-royalties>. 
26. Matt Bruenig, "Social Wealth Fund for America," People's Policy Project, 2018, <https://www.peoplespolicyproject.org/projects/social-wealth-fund/>. 
27. Hillary Clinton, *What Happened* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 239. 
28. Peter Gowan, "Why We Need a Social Wealth Fund," *Jacobin*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/08/social-wealth-fund-alaska-peoples-policy-project>. 
29. Quoted in Nathan Schneider, "Why the Tech Elite Is Getting Behind Universal Basic Income," *Vice*, January 6, 2015, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mv5d3y/something-for-everyone-0000546-v22n1. 
30. Quoted in Jathon Sadowski, "Why Silicon Valley is embracing universal basic income," *The Guardian*, June 22, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/22/silicon-valley-universal-basic-income-y-combinator>. 
31. Charles Murray, *In Our Hands: A Plan to Replace the Welfare State* (Washington DC: AEI Press, 2016), 35. 
32. Charles Murray, "Universal income: A guaranteed income for every American," American Enterprise Institute, June 3, 2016, <http://www.aei.org/publication/a-guaranteed-income-for-every-american/>. 
33. Fredric Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," *New Left Review*, 25 (January–February 2004): 35–54. 
34. Jamie Peck, *Workfare States* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 68–70. 
35. Rebecca Blank and Brian Kovak. "The Growing Problem of Disconnected Mothers." *Focus* 25, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2007-08): 27. 
36. H. Luke Shaefer and Kathryn Edin, "Welfare Reform and the Families It Left Behind," Stanford Center on Policy and Inequality, 2018, https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways_Winter2018_Families-Left-Behind.pdf. 
37. Barbara Fields and Karen E. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in America* (New York: Verso, 2012). 
38. Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (New York: Cox and Murray), 46. 
39. Edward Mattison, "Stop Making Sense: Charles Murray and the Reagan Perspective on Social Welfare Policy and the Poor," *Yale Law & Policy Review* 4, no. 1 (1985): 92. 
40. Nancy Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A Reply to Michael Dawson," *Critical Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 175. 
41. See Robert Brenner, *Economics of Global Turbulence* (New York: Verso, 2005). 
42. "Historicizing White Nostalgia: Race and American Fordism," *Blind Field Journal*, August 3, 2017, <https://blindfieldjournal.com/2017/08/03/historicizing-white-nostalgia-race-and-american-fordism/>. Accessed November 20, 2018. 
43. For an overview of welfare rights activism in the United States, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Function of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage, 1993). See also Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge 2004). 

44. Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 36. 
45. Judith Shulevitz, "Forgotten Feminisms: Johnnie Tillmon's Battle Against 'The Man,'" *New York Review of Books*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/06/26/forgotten-feminisms-johnnie-tillmons-battle-against-the-man/>. 
46. Johnnie Tillmon, "Welfare is a Woman's Issue," Direct Action Welfare Group Inc. <https://www.wvdawg.org/02/2012/johnnie-tillmon-welfare-is-a-womans-issue>. 
47. See: Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank-and-File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (New York: Verso, 2010). 
48. Christian Parenti, "The Making of the American Police State," *Jacobin*, July 28, 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/07/incarceration-capitalism-black-lives-matter/>. 
49. Parenti, "The Making of the American Police State." 
50. Erin Hatton, *The Temp Economy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 22. 
51. David Noble, *Forces of Production: A Social History of Industrial Automation* (London: Routledge, 1985), 74. 
52. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat: Digital Labour in the Global Vortex* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 49. 
53. Stephen Ratner, "Volcker Asserts U.S. Must Trim Living Standard," *New York Times*, October 18, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/18/archives/volcker-asserts-us-must-trim-living-standard-warns-of-inflation.html>. 
54. Thomas B. Edsall, "Oct. 1, 1981: That Day Is Finally Here—Reagan's Budget Cuts Begin," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1981, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1981/10/01/oct-1-1981-that-day-is-finally-here-reagans-budget-cuts-begin/c4872e17-43c4-46a6-8d4e-6804027678c0/>. 
55. Valerie Wilson, "People of color will be a majority of the American working class by 2032," Economic Policy Institute, July 9, 2016, <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-changing-demographics-of-americas-working-class/>. 
56. Sam Altman, "The United Slate: Ten Policy Goals," <http://unitedslate.samaltman.com/ten-policy-goals.html>. 
57. Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici, *Counter-Planning from the Kitchen: Wages for Housework a Perspective on Capital and the Left* (New York: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 9–10. 
58. Constant 2014 dollars. See David Calnitsky, "'More Normal than Welfare': The Mincome Experiment, Stigma, and Community Experience," *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53, no. 1 (February 2006): 26–71. 
59. David Calnitsky and Jonathan P. Latner, "Basic Income in a Small Town: Understanding the Elusive Effects on Work," *Social Problems*, 64, no. 3 (2017): 373–397. 
60. Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976): 451. 
61. David Calnitsky, "Debating Basic Income," *Catalyst*, 1, no. 3 (Fall 2017), <https://catalyst-journal.com/vol1/no3/debating-basic-income>. 
62. Federici, *Revolution*, 106. 

63. Federici, *Revolution*, 108. [🔗](#)
64. See Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). [🔗](#)
65. Kevin Drum, “Socialism Is the New Black,” *Mother Jones*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2018/08/socialism-is-the-new-black/>. [🔗](#)

 [Bio](#)



Lindsey Macdonald

Lindsey Macdonald is a Cultural Studies PhD candidate and graduate lecturer in the School of Integrative Studies at George Mason University. Her research interests include Marxist political economy, critical media studies, and critical theory.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Paula Santa Rosa, "Review of 'The Pink Tide: Media Access and Political Power in Latin America' edited by Lee Artz (Rowman & Littlefield)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.14>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *The Pink Tide: Media Access and Political Power in Latin America* edited by Lee Artz (Rowman & Littlefield)

Paula Santa Rosa

ABSTRACT The 'Pink Tide' refers to the unprecedented succession of electoral victories of socialist-leaning populist presidents in the region, starting with Chavéz's victory in 1998. This anthology explores media reforms in countries that most consistently reelected progressive candidates, specifically Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Brazil. Through these case studies, Artz seeks to show that the primary indicator of democracy and social justice is the extent to which governments give the population direct access and control of the means of communication. Despite the complexities of the different cases, Artz presses that public participatory media, by promoting and prefiguring a socialist society, is an integral part of the democratic struggle that must be actively and continuously pursued by social movements.

The Pink Tide: Media Access and Political Power in Latin America. Edited by Lee Artz. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017, 226 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978-1-78660-239-8. US List: \$135.00.

Edited by Lee Artz, this volume brings together a collection of articles that critically analyze media democratization efforts in Latin America's Pink Tide governments. The "Pink Tide" refers to the unprecedented succession of electoral victories of socialist-leaning populist presidents in the region, starting with Chavéz's victory in 1998 (1, 3). The book explores media reforms in countries that most consistently reelected progressive candidates, specifically Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Brazil. Through these case studies, Artz seeks to show that the primary indicator of democracy and social justice is the extent to which governments give the population direct access to and control of the means of communication (3).

In chapter 1, Artz defends the claim that the Pink Tide is the political expression and culmination of mass movements of a reconfigured working class against neoliberal reforms, with demands for basic subsistence (4, 6, 10, 19). Resisting the populist label, he argues that such characterization dismisses the decisive and active role of popular movements, and the robust participatory democracy programs and substantial social benefits brought by some of these governments (9). He differentiates between Pink Tide governments that have empowered popular movements and fostered participatory democratic control of public services, like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and the ones that hindered social participation and diverted mass movements from political power, like Brazil, Argentina, and Chile (4, 7). Borrowing from Gramsci's notion of the Integral State, he argues that a socialist government may exist within a capitalist State, but if accompanied by a civil society dedicated to social justice, lead by a popular socialist movement, it could be capable of transforming the social order (30). He also defends the idea that public participatory media is a crucial means for sharing new ideas and values, while demonstrating a socialist alternative to commercial media and neoliberal

imperatives (39, 43). Yet surprisingly he seems to bypass discussions of mass media's influence and the effects of commercial media in the mediatization of politics, which is intrinsically connected with rise of populism. Another potential benefit of a public participatory media system might be the reduction of populist politics.

The first four contributions explore the media reforms in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Uruguay. Demonstrating an understanding of the *positive* freedom of expression and the recognition of information and airwaves as public goods, the reforms established specify that broadcast licenses would be divided in three equal parts: 33% for public media, 33% for private media, and 34% for community media (except Venezuela, which didn't specify the percentages for each). Prior to these reforms, these countries had been characterized by media ownership concentrated among a few families and conglomerates, connected with commercial interests and conservative political parties. Also, community radios were often repressed and persecuted for promoting radical politics that opposed the political and economic elites. These reforms guaranteed and expanded the rights of community media and included previously excluded voices with positive representations and self-representations. All cases involved different participatory processes and levels of citizen participation.

Yet each country had different levels of antagonism towards the established media elites, either refusing to renew and revoking licenses (Venezuela, Uruguay), posing sanctions for the promotion of discrimination (Bolivia), or more radically confiscating private media and prohibiting media ownership by non-media enterprises (Ecuador). The chapters highlight different challenges encountered, such as the oppositional political force of private media, polarization, the varying lack of funding for community media and participatory bodies, community media reliance on advertising and foreign NGOs, the corrupting power of media corporations, and the entrenchment of right-wing and media actors within state bureaucracies. Ultimately, private media remains dominant and, in varying degrees, community media remains local and marginal. Light's contribution proposes the Uruguayan water movement as a successful model, emphasizing social movements' ongoing mobilization and appeals beyond partisan, political, and ideological divides (124-126). Curiously, and in-line with Artz who, in the introduction, skirted discussions of mass media's influence, Light's account neglects the role of media in this struggle. It seems to me that the media coverage of the water movement would not be as biased and antagonistic as the coverage of media democratization, since it did not threaten (at least not as directly) the economic and political power of the national media elites, and thus would not lead to a polarized media and public sphere articulated around partisan politics. Regardless of conjecture, the capacity of this model to be replicated for media reforms seems questionable.

In chapter 6, Harlow and Davis explore what happens to alternative media when leftist governments gain power, looking at cases in El Salvador, Brazil, and Argentina. They argue that alternative media can still play a counterhegemonic and independent role, despite having interests aligned with the government. In polarized contexts, they warn that the challenge is to resist uncritically valorizing the government for fears of undermining it (147). However insightful, their assumption that alternative media is necessarily leftist seems myopic; extreme-right alternative media isn't an exclusively US phenomenon. It would be interesting to investigate, across the political spectrum, the alternative media that might have emerged with the Pink Tide.

In chapter 7, Schwartz provides a fierce Marxist critique of Brazil's digital revolution through the analysis of *Fora do Eixo*, a website for alternative cultural production. *Fora do Eixo* was ultimately an expression of the emerging middle-class that actually reinforced digital capitalism and consumer culture, and failed to build a democratic public-access

digital culture. Subsequently, Reilly discusses regional communicative sovereignty through the Pink Tide media initiatives for cultural exchange and networking, pointing to difficulties of regional integration.

As expected, the authors' views are not always aligned. For example, contrary to Artz, Kitzberger presents Correa's government as top-down and disconnected from mass movements (88, 89, 106). Additionally, Lupien brings a more liberal-pluralist approach and defends the inclusion of private actors in regulating bodies, while arguing against direct government funding for community media to prevent compromising autonomy (81). Artz directly addresses this by arguing that government financing does not imply a lack of democracy or independence, but provides the necessary support for the production of content independent from advertising sales and profit returns (39). He goes even further, arguing that, on its own, autonomous grassroots alternative media actually releases pressure from the dominant hegemony by transferring potential opposition to the private sphere, leaving power relations unchanged (193).

The concluding chapter reads almost like a manifesto as Artz eloquently defends the idea that there is no compromise between neoliberal capitalism and democratic socialism. He makes explicit the connection between social movements, media reforms, and broader social transformations in the Pink Tide, differentiating between 21st Century Socialist governments like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and those that facilitated neoliberalism and "that may rightly be called populists," like Brazil and Argentina (196-199). Despite the complexities of the different cases, Artz presses that public participatory media, by promoting and prefiguring a socialist society, is an integral part of the democratic struggle that must be actively and continuously pursued by social movements (194).

 [Bio](#)



Paula Santa Rosa

Paula Santa Rosa is a Brazilian PhD student in the Communication Department at the University of California, San Diego. Her research interests are left populism, social movements, political parties, and institutional and social change.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Christian Quaresma, "Review of *The Social Life of Financial Derivatives: Markets, Risk, and Time* by Edward LiPuma (Duke University Press)," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.15>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *The Social Life of Financial Derivatives: Markets, Risk, and Time* by Edward LiPuma (Duke University Press)

Christian Quaresma

ABSTRACT Edward LiPuma outlines a sociohistorical theory of the market that positions derivatives trading as initiating a new form of capitalism. The book also confronts the narratives that the financial sector tells itself about the causes and aftermath of the financial crisis, revealing the social relations that underpin the entire enterprise. LiPuma exposes the wild-seeming speculation of hedge fund managers and traders as a rationale that disappears the social aspect of its own ritual induction and relational mode of production and reproduction. An understanding of the social underpinning of financial markets, LiPuma hopes, can lead to a politics of "just optionality" where the same methods for betting on securitized commodities (assets made liquid) like housing mortgages can be transferred into wagers that further the collective good. For Marxists, LiPuma has an urgent message: existing theories of the market are incomplete without an understanding of how financial capital, led by derivatives trading, has transformed the means by which capital reproduces itself.

The Social Life of Financial Derivatives: Markets, Risk, and Time. By Edward LiPuma. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017, 424 pp. (paperback) ISBN 9780822369714. US List: \$29.95.

Edward LiPuma takes the financial crisis of 2008 as the focal point for his recent book on derivatives trading and the development of a new logic of financial capitalism. Circling outward from the financial crisis, LiPuma outlines a sociohistorical theory of the market that positions derivatives trading as initiating a new form of capitalism. The book also confronts the narratives that the financial sector tells itself about the causes and aftermath of the financial crisis, revealing the social relations that underpin the entire enterprise. Taking an ethnographic perspective of the development of a culture of finance, this book explores the habitus of traders, using anecdotes to trace derivatives trading from a niche market in the 1970s to the present where investment capital is the predominant form of capital accumulation. An understanding of the social underpinning of financial markets, LiPuma hopes, can lead to a politics of "just optionality" where the same methods for betting on securitized commodities (assets made liquid) like housing mortgages can be transferred into wagers that further the collective good.

For Marxists, LiPuma has an urgent message: existing theories of the market are incomplete without an understanding of how financial capital, led by derivatives trading, has transformed the means by which capital reproduces itself. The accumulation of capital through circulation and trading has been divorced from traditional means of production. In its place, "global transnational trading networks and derivatives markets are absorbing almost all of the newly 'printed' dollars" (53). Derivatives are time-dependent wagers made against a spread of risks (such as the collateralized mortgage obligations of homeowners in the US) in the form of a futures contract between competing parties about an event or outcome. Such wagers systematize risks, which impact and include

society, by fabricating them into linear and deterministic terms devoid of any relation to the actors outside of an “efficient” market. The competition between the two parties of any derivatives wager begets further competition as the outsized rewards for winning a trade spur traders on to take greater risks—fabricating spreads of volatility that, because of their financial heft, inflect real events, increasing the wager’s volatility even more—injecting more cash flow into this mechanism for accumulation and away from production. LiPuma describes this cycle as a treadmill effect where traders seek increasingly exotic trades, amplifying volatility, exemplified par excellence by the extremely volatile positions regarding the housing market that led to the financial crisis of 2008. When confronted with the question of the *why* of this self-destructive scheme, LiPuma offers an account of agents’ subjectivity to escape the tautology implicit in this means of financial reproduction and escalating volumes of accumulation and volatility.

LiPuma argues that the mathematic and scientific naturalization of the market buries an underlying set of social relations that are inseparable from the decisions and financial culture that created and perpetuates derivatives markets. The Black-Scholes equation is the foundation for pricing a derivative—though it is not explored in detail until the penultimate chapter of the book—and it provides a concrete-seeming, scientized legitimization of the market as a complete, self-sustaining totality. LiPuma describes how the equation categorically denies the social or subjective role market agents play in devising the wagers or their value, which is intrinsically nonexistent outside a contract’s fulfillment. Ironically, this structure is upheld by the collective belief of the market agents who, through formal contractual obligations mediated by mathematical precision, perform the ritual exorcising of the social from the clandestine realm of abstract risk.

The primary obstacle to understanding derivatives markets is the way knowledge of this obscure technique is inculcated and circulated. LiPuma exposes the wild-seeming speculation of hedge fund managers and traders as a rationale that disappears the social aspect of its own ritual induction and relational mode of production and reproduction. He calls on the term “the *illusio*,” drawn from Bourdieu, to describe the financial institution’s “misrecognition of the real relations of the production of the structure of financial circulation” (350). This veiled act of disappearing the social is itself a crucial social performance, contributing to a habitus of derivatives trading and financial markets which takes the place of the invisible hand guiding the market. Far from the objective market of “rational, utility maximizing, actors” (267), agents of firms like Morgan Stanley undergo rites of passage that internalize the culture of finance and alter their inductees’ dispositions to compulsively acquire more money by participating in a workplace culture that “segregates the participants from other socialities even as it extends the sociality of work [into] the once sacrosanct temporal space of leisure, family, and recreation” (302). These sets of practices are extrinsic to the market’s logic and rules, taking for granted and thus leaving itself open to the uncertainty of the social realm in the future when, for example, payment for a wager comes due. Thus, the analysis of the market’s collapse in 2008 cannot be understood from within the market form alone, as accounts by the very same market participants responsible for the crisis do not demonstrate the tools needed for just such a critical project.

Derivatives—essential to understand for the development of LiPuma’s central argument—are only partially explained until Chapter 9, meanwhile, in the preceding chapters LiPuma outlines a social theory around this time-based trading mechanism, delving into comparative accounts of social rites of passage, tokens, and other cultural rituals to illuminate the sociality inherent in financial capitalism that is obscured from the lay person but is brought out in his ethnographic approach. However, the organization of the book requires one to continuously circle back to piece together the incomplete

descriptions LiPuma provides. The effect is disorienting and the piecemeal approach of how derivatives actually function creates greater distances for the reader to traverse than is necessary, detracting from the important arguments that the book contains. In the final chapter, LiPuma does not flesh out so much as gesture toward the “just optionality” in which he hopes to see derivatives repurposed for enhancing social good, offering no solutions for confronting the walled-off financial institution and its means of intellectual reproduction. His primary aim is to outline a social theory that runs counter to the narratives and analyses offered by the likes of Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke. Although it is cumbersome, the argument that he makes is a worthwhile one.

 [Bio](#)



Christian Quaresma

Christian Quaresma holds a Master's degree in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. He is a social researcher working in the employment services sector in Toronto. Currently, he is preparing a manuscript of his MA thesis, an ethnographic account of the Toronto City Planning Division's approach to development and public consultation in diverse neighborhoods.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Jason Hannan, "Review of *Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S. Political Culture* by Dana Cloud (Ohio State University Press)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.16>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S. Political Culture* by Dana Cloud (Ohio State University Press)

Jason Hannan

ABSTRACT Dana Cloud's marvelous new book provides just the sort of deep understanding and practical guidance needed for thoughtful and effective political engagement in the Trump era. In three fascinating case studies, Cloud demonstrates the impotence of naked facts and the power of mediation. First, she compares the cases of Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, both of whom leaked classified information in acts of patriotic resistance. Second, in a chapter on the 2014 television series *Cosmos*, Cloud seeks to explain the show's enormous rhetorical power. Third, Cloud compares the revolutionary rhetoric of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* to that of the Black Lives Matter and Occupy movements. As we live through the devastation wrought by a Trump presidency, as we seek to make sense of it all in our scholarship and our classrooms, as we resist his attempt to reengineer of reality and search for ways to reassert our own reality, the reality of the people, *Reality Bites* comes not a moment too soon.

Cloud, Dana. *Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S. Political Culture*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2018. Pp. 206. (paper). ISBN 978-0-8142-5465-3. US list \$29.95.

The election of Donald Trump to the office of the President of the United States still leaves us, more than a year and half later, groping in the dark for answers to questions such as: How is it that a pathological liar, a man with absolutely no respect for truth, logic, and evidence, could march straight into the White House? Here was a cartoon-like personality out of the eighties, notorious for his numerous bankruptcies and a hilariously bad comb over. His candidacy was thought to be so incredibly silly, his prospects for electoral victory so cosmically improbable, that comedian Jon Oliver actively encouraged him to run—all for the sake of a good laugh. But that laughter turned into raw, blood-curdling fear as Trump first won the Republican primaries and then proceeded to defeat Hillary Clinton in the general election. Hillary had widely been seen as the natural victor. But it turned out that Trump played a political game for which Hillary was completely unprepared. Against her dry, humorless, and uninspiring political style, he fashioned an egregious performance of mendacity, incivility, tastelessness, trashiness, and irreverence. This performance had an underlying message: the old days of politics as usual are over. It is time to shake things up. To almost everyone's surprise, this rhetorical strategy worked.

As we now live through the nightmare of Trump's victory—the unprecedented transfer of wealth from the poor and the middle class to the ultra-rich, tax breaks to mega-corporations, the shredding of civil liberties, horrifying violence against immigrants and people of color, and an aggressive assault upon the environment—we struggle to answer two questions: how to make sense of it all and how to respond. To that end, Dana Cloud's marvelous new book, *Reality Bites: Rhetoric and the Circulation of Truth Claims in U.S.*

Political Culture, provides just the sort of deep understanding and practical guidance needed for thoughtful and effective political engagement in the Trump era.

Cloud deftly carves out a theoretical standpoint between the twin extremes of foundationalism and relativism, the former a lingering relic of early analytic philosophy, the latter still very much a fashionable, if not always explicit, position within the humanities. She identifies her standpoint with the “reality-based community” (3). Challenging the anti-realism of poststructuralist thought, she embraces a critical realism rooted in the concepts of reality and truth. Cloud defines reality as the natural and social world around us. She defines truth as the positive relationship between a particular claim and reality. But truth for Cloud is not, or not just, another version of the correspondence theory. Rather, it is very much a practical concept. She locates truth in the everyday experience of ordinary people. In doing so, she follows in the tradition of Marx, Lukács, Gramsci, and Bourdieu, who see in the dialectic of practical experience the source of truth and normativity.

As a seasoned rhetorical theorist and critic, Cloud articulates her practical conception of truth by undoing Aristotle’s hierarchy of *episteme* (formal knowledge and understanding) over *doxa* (popular opinion). She equalizes the relationship between them, arguing that the one can become the other, and vice versa. While there is a clear populist dimension to this approach, it nonetheless differs from the political philosophy of Ernesto Laclau in *Populist Reason* and Chantal Mouffe in *For a Left Populism*. Neither Laclau nor Mouffe have any use for truth, choosing to locate political legitimacy exclusively in populist will. Their populism is more akin to tribalism than to a rational democratic politics. The merit of Cloud’s approach is her prudent avoidance of the neo-tribalist temptation. To fight back against Trump, it will take more than a mere rival populism. His mendacity must be fought with populism plus truth.

The secret to the stunning political success of Trump and American right is their virtual monopoly upon “strategies of mediation” (9). While Democratic politicians undoubtedly have a better command of the facts, they place far too much faith in the power of facts alone. Mainstream newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and media projects like PolitiFact, have followed this pattern by fact-checking Trump and documenting his innumerable lies. This naïve faith in naked facts, in self-evident truths, has proven to be weak and futile in the face of a remarkably powerful right-wing political machine that has managed to take command of the national conversation by expertly, albeit manipulatively, employing the rhetorical strategies of affect, embodiment, narrative, myth, and spectacle. If liberals and progressives wish to mount an effective counter-campaign against this manipulative assault, then they would do well to understand the rhetorical character of facts and the importance of framing facts through strategies of mediation.

In three fascinating case studies, Cloud demonstrates the impotence of naked facts and the power of mediation. First, she compares the cases of Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, both of whom leaked classified information in acts of patriotic resistance. Despite both committing the same crime, the media framing of their actions was completely different. Snowden’s leak was mediated through the journalism of Glenn Greenwald, who helped construct a clear and memorable narrative about government surveillance. Snowden became a popular hero, a character straight out of an American thriller novel. Manning, however, became the object of TMZ-style gossip. She released a mountain of classified information through WikiLeaks, an “information dump” (76) without framing or mediation. The consequence was that the public focused on the messenger, and her gender identity and sexual orientation, not the message. Second, in a chapter on the 2014 television series *Cosmos*, Cloud seeks to explain the show’s

enormous rhetorical power. *Cosmos* masterfully mediated its progressive content (science is actually considered progressive in America) through myth, narrative, affect, embodiment, and spectacle. To watch *Cosmos* is not just to acquire a list of facts about the natural world. It is to become engrossed in a powerful story about humanity's modest place in a vast and complex universe. Third, Cloud compares the revolutionary rhetoric of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* to that of the Black Lives Matter and Occupy movements. Despite very different propositional content, Paine, BLM, and Occupy nonetheless share something crucial in common: they all seized upon revolutionary moment and employed the strategies of affect, identification, embodiment, narrative, myth, and spectacle to assert the "insurrectionary knowledges" (12) of ordinary people against the dominant framing of social reality. Paine, BLM, and Occupy represent powerful examples of the truth from below, the voice of the people speaking truth to power. During these revolutionary moments, when the reality of the dominant class bites, "our reality bites back" (168).

Reality Bites is a lucid, sophisticated, and passionate book. The argument is sharp and convincing. The research is thorough and rigorous. *Reality Bites* admirably speaks to multiple audiences—scholars, students, journalists, and activists. As we live through the devastation wrought by a Trump presidency, as we seek to make sense of it all in our scholarship and our classrooms, as we resist his attempt to reengineer reality and search for ways to reassert our own reality, the reality of the people, *Reality Bites* comes not a moment too soon. It is therefore a highly recommended book.

 [Bio](#)

Jason Hannan

Jason Hannan is Associate Professor in the Department of Rhetoric & Communications at the University of Winnipeg. He is the editor of *Truth in the Public Sphere* (2016) and *Philosophical Profiles in the Theory of Communication* (2012). His current book project is entitled, *Critique of Capitalist Reason: MacIntyre, Communication, and the Politics of Revolution*, under contract with Bloomsbury.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Saugher Nojan, "Review of *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and The Crisis of Racial Burnout* by Lynn Mie Itagaki (University of Minnesota Press)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.17>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and The Crisis of Racial Burnout* by Lynn Mie Itagaki (University of Minnesota Press)

Saugher Nojan

ABSTRACT Lynn Mie Itagaki contributes to cultural and comparative race studies by uncovering the implications of what she calls the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion—a constellation of events spurned on by the Rodney King verdict—for intersecting groups and communities including women, immigrants, Black, Asians, and Latina/o-Americans. Each chapter provides a different context (family, education, neighborhood) for structures and discourses that perpetuate civil racism, while at the same time illuminating specific acts of resistance and subversion that occur, in each instance, through media, activism, and art. Itagaki's methodology moves beyond critical literary analysis to provide important social commentary and critique that will prove useful to interdisciplinary scholars seeking to learn about racial formations in the neoliberal U.S. context.

Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and The Crisis of Racial Burnout
by Lynn Mie Itagaki. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016,
336 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978-0-8166-9921-6. US List: \$25.00.

In *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout*, Lynn Mie Itagaki contributes to cultural and comparative race studies by uncovering the implications of what she calls the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion—a constellation of events spurned on by the Rodney King verdict—for intersecting groups and communities including women, immigrants, Black, Asians, and Latina/o-Americans. Her work presents unique racial concepts that unmask the process of how racism and civil society are intertwined and extended through the US. She looks at the effects of the US both at home and abroad and in the contemporary contexts of post-racialism and colorblindness, as well as archaic forms of racial violence. Itagaki's expertise in critical ethnic studies, women of color feminisms, and 21st century African-American and Asian-American literatures shines through in her theoretically-rich literary and cultural analysis of various social "texts." The analysis of journalism, film, literature, theatre, and other media provide insight into a wide array of issues including but not limited to: civility/incivility, racism, patriarchy, citizenship, American politics and media, militarism, capitalism, neoliberalism, intersectionality, resistance, and solidarity. Itagaki's methodology moves beyond critical literary analysis to provide important social commentary and critique that will prove useful to interdisciplinary scholars seeking to learn about racial formations in the neoliberal US context.

Itagaki's discussion of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion and the crisis of racial burnout is based on the events surrounding the mass public reception of the videotaped beating of Rodney King, the acquittal of the officers involved, and the uprising that followed. Itagaki draws upon these events to elucidate how civil racism manifests in racialized discourses of

civility that emerge in contradictory discourses of colorblindness, equal rights and meritocracy. Civil racism appears as a “discourse of racial civility” and is characterized by the “triumph of a politics of civility at the expense of racial equality” (6). Each chapter provides a different context (family, education, neighborhood) for structures and discourses that perpetuate civil racism, while at the same time illuminating specific acts of resistance and subversion that occur, in each instance, through media, activism, and art. The epilogue brings together the implications of civil racism into the current context of the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrating how discourses of (in)civility continue to characterize how the state relates to citizens, noncitizens, and acts of dissent. In addition to her main theoretical framework of “civil racism,” Itagaki provides significant concepts throughout her text that nuance racialization more broadly.

One strength of this work is how Itagaki skillfully interweaves several theories to provide new insight on racialization. Of these concepts, I will focus on racial pyramidization and the biologization and territorialization of (in)civility. All of these concepts help us make sense of specific discourses of race and racialization in the context of (in)civility: how they emerge, how they play out in the realm of politics, and how acts of resistance are portrayed and delegitimized in the media and by the state. Drawing on the frameworks of intersectionality and racialized social systems in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, and others, Itagaki introduces the concept of racial pyramidization, which disaggregates the experiences of racialized groups along the lines of class, gender, and citizenship, while still understanding them in relation to white supremacy and anti-blackness. Using the figure of a pyramid, Itagaki explains that: “Pyramidization provides another way to imagine civil racism and racial burnout: the triangulation on the faces closest to the viewer obscures the furthest, hidden vertex, a racial erasure for one group that often may be ignored but is still a crucial defining party of the figure” (9). Through pyramidization, Itagaki shows how framing the LA crisis as a largely White/Black, Black/Korean conflict, erases the impact of the crisis on the Latinx community. The Latinx community made up half of all arrests where participants were involved in “looting and mayhem” (104). The state deported hundreds of undocumented migrants in the aftermath as an opportunity to enact retributive violence on this community and delegitimize their solidarity with Blacks challenging state injustices. Since the state cannot easily deport citizens, it elicited public debates on civility in this moment of urban upheaval to confirm that “have nots” lack the civic virtues that build a democracy and thus deserve to be amputated from it” (88). Thus, through techniques attributable to racial pyramidization, the state reclaims its power as the only institution that can “evaluate justice and adjudicate punishment” (105–6).

Furthermore, the state relies on racist ideologies that biologize civility, culture, and merit in order to blame individuals and communities for their conditions of poverty and violence. Framing the 1992 Rebellion as “riots” and “revenge” for the police beating of Rodney King and the murder of Latasha Harlins enabled the state and the media to characterize participants as innately savage, criminal, and immoral, and deserving of punishment for committing uncivil violence (120). Itagaki extends this framework by demonstrating how the “biologization of civility” (86) operates transnationally in what she terms, “territorialization of incivility” (106). Itagaki explains that mapping incivility onto “non-white, non-citizen” bodies enables the state to enact punishment, not only on these bodies, but also on the countries associated with these bodies, as part of post-Cold War geopolitics and imperialist policies (107). All of these concepts further draw out the importance of thinking from a framework of civil racism to illuminate the scope of the state, conceptions of civility and incivility, and the contradictions in state discourses and actions.

These concepts, developed here to understand the particular context of the LA rebellions, help illuminate race relations in the neoliberal era and the ways that the state uses discourses of civility to enact violence and delegitimize resistance by people of color working against racism. As a sociologist coming to this work, I found Itagaki's elaboration of civil racism theoretically rich and relevant for many other facets of race relations in the US post-Cold War context. There were times when I would get lost in the details of the social texts that Itagaki was reviewing, but the breadth and depth of her examples did not detract from the book's important contributions. I would have liked to see a section where Itagaki elaborated on how civil racism, as a framework, could be built upon or applied to different state relations that delegitimize dissent, especially in the post-9/11 world. I appreciated Itagaki's careful use and analysis of language. Calling the events that occurred in 1992 a rebellion instead of a riot provides insight into how the rest of her book centers the subversion of people of color in the face of state oppression. Overall, I recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn more about race, intersectionality, citizenship, and critical literary/media analysis.

 [Bio](#)



Saugher Nojan

Saugher Nojan is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at University of California, Santa Cruz, with a designated emphasis in Education and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies. Saugher studies Muslim and Afghan diasporic experiences with regards to education, migration, gendered racialization, Islamophobia and US empire.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Alexis de Coning, "Review of *Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830–1934* by Melissa N. Stein (University of Minnesota Press)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.18>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830–1934* by Melissa N. Stein (University of Minnesota Press)

Alexis de Coning

ABSTRACT Melissa N. Stein's *Measuring Manhood* tackles the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and their attendant "sciences" across a century of US history. While the burgeoning fields of ethnology and sexology were equally prominent in Europe during this period, her focus on the US specifies the ways in which American "racial scientists" and sexologists differed from their European counterparts, as their research was often used to justify or bolster nation-specific cultural norms and legislation. The concept of masculinity was not simply a matter of "manhood" in the narrow sense, but carried with it a glut of other associations: humanity, civilization, citizenship, intelligence, morality, whiteness, cisgender heterosexuality, and middle-class restraint. Stein manages to convey the complexity and reciprocity of these constructions in each chapter with careful argumentation and ample examples.

Stein, Melissa N. *Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830–1934*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0-8166-7303-2. US List \$27 (paperback)

The publication of *Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830–1934* seems almost prescient at this juncture in the history of the United States. The increased visibility of state violence against African Americans, the re-emergence and rise of white nationalism and identitarianism, and anxieties around immigration and citizenship over the last few years provide a contemporary backdrop for the book's historical investigation of race and masculinity in the US.

Melissa N. Stein's *Measuring Manhood* tackles the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and their attendant "sciences" across a century of US history. While the burgeoning fields of ethnology and sexology were equally prominent in Europe during this period, her focus on the US specifies the ways in which American "racial scientists" and sexologists differed from their European counterparts, as their research was often used to justify or bolster nation-specific cultural norms and legislation—chattel slavery and lynching, for instance. Stein notes that the 1830s provide the ideal turning point at which to begin her investigation: during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European scientists "increasingly looked to the newly formed United States of America as a perfect laboratory for their theories about race," while American science was simultaneously "coming into its own" (11). Although Europe had "long seen a booming scientific literature on race dating back to the early modern period," (10) American ethnologists were respected in Europe, and the transatlantic exchange of ideas influenced ethnological thinkers across both continents; US racial scientists thus had a significant impact on European theories of racial difference. It is within this "perfect laboratory" that Stein traces the developments of scientific racism with extensive historical research,

drawing on both primary and secondary sources to elucidate the constructions of normal and abnormal manhood.

Nonetheless, as the socio-political landscape became more contentious, the axioms of ethnology evolved over time with racial scientists adapting their theories and findings to respond to the changing positions of African Americans and women in US society. Importantly, Stein foregrounds the pervasiveness of gender and sexuality within race-science discourses and their temporal shifts. Despite the assumption that racial disparity constituted an exclusive focus for many ethnological scientists, questions of racial difference, sex, gender, and reproduction were often invoked—either implicitly or explicitly—to maintain arguments about the superiority of Anglo-Saxon men, and the concomitant inferiority of African Americans, women, other non-white Europeans, and immigrants. For these racial scientists and sexologists, then, the stakes of their investigations were to prove and naturalize the gendered and racial hierarchies (and, by extension, inequalities) that were being challenged at various points by abolitionists, suffragist movements, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and occasionally from within the discipline of ethnology itself. The concept of masculinity was therefore not simply a matter of “manhood” in the narrow sense, but carried with it a glut of other associations: humanity, civilization, citizenship, intelligence, morality, whiteness, cisgender heterosexuality, and middle-class restraint. Stein manages to convey the complexity and reciprocity of these constructions in each chapter with careful argumentation and ample examples.

The book moves chronologically, with each chapter honing in on a prominent racial scientist or a specific problem. However, even though different racial scientists’ concerns and anxieties shifted over the century, the different chapters often bleed into each other, reflecting the intellectual continuity and overlaps among each of the figures discussed. In “Races of Men,” Stein begins her exploration of racial science and masculinity with antebellum ethnology. This first chapter presents the pioneers of US ethnology as preoccupied with the question of original unity or diversity; in other words, did the different races emerge from one common ancestor, or were they in fact separate species? As Stein demonstrates from this question, antebellum ethnologists were thus focused on less “sex-specific characteristics” like bones and skin; however, their inquiries were not gender-neutral, with racial scientists positing the white male as the default subject, and conceptualizing race in terms of “male lineages and patriarchal destinies” (29). However, in the second chapter, “An Equal Beard for Equal Voting,” Stein shows how Civil War racial scientists’ continued use of the white male body as normative became more overtly gendered, with beards and body hair signaling white men’s aptitude for both manhood and citizenship. Furthermore, the trope of the hypersexual black man was legitimized by ethnologists and physicians at this time—establishing the discourse of African-American masculinity as excessive and unruly.

It is thus interesting that by the turn of the century, the “abnormality” of black sexuality becomes a foil to white sexuality in a different context—that of “inverts” and homosexuals. In Chapter 3, “Inverts, Perverts, and Primitives,” Stein elucidates the links among sexology, racial thought, and class politics from roughly 1890 to the 1920s. Black, immigrant, and working-class sexualities were already seen as degenerate; homosexuality and non-normative gender expressions in these groups were to be expected (albeit deplored) and interpreted as a moral failing on the part of individuals. For middle-class whites, however, “inversion” was typically framed as congenital—an affliction that could not be helped, although it did contribute to “race suicide.” (214) Stein then turns our attention back to the stereotyping of African American men as oversexed in the fourth chapter, “Unsexing the Race.” Here she tackles debates around lynching and castration

during the same period as the previous chapter, further demonstrating the overlaps between sexual and racial sciences. Moreover, she highlights the “intersection between science and the street,” (219) as scientific and public discourses on race, biological essentialism, and black hypersexuality were largely indistinguishable from one another. In the final chapter, “Walter White, Scientific Racism, and the NAACP Antilynching Campaign,” Stein focuses on the work of NAACP leader Walter White in the late 1920s. White’s Antilynching Campaign leveraged strategic relationships with white scientists to challenge the public discourse undergirded by racial science and biological determinism at a pivotal and transitional moment.

However, it should be noted that Stein also includes instances of people who challenged these discourses throughout the book—drawing attention to the dissenting voices that have existed alongside the mainstreaming of ethnology since its inception. She underscores that while ethnological theories were often treated as cutting-edge science, contemporary critics also resisted the pseudoscience of ethnology. Furthermore, Stein’s own tone performs a similar function at various points throughout the book. For example, ethnologist Samuel Cartwright compared the sleeping habits of African Americans to infants, arguing that both groups “instinctively” cover their faces while sleeping. Here Stein remarks that one “presumes that Cartwright must have traveled extensively and suffered considerable insomnia to have had the opportunity to witness enough babies and African Americans in slumber to declare face covering to be universal among both” (76–77). Moments like these provide a much-needed undercutting of the apparent gravitas of ethnological theory and the litany of examples of white men’s supposed intellectual superiority.

This book would make a strong addition to syllabi in history, cultural studies, gender and women’s studies, masculinity studies, and ethnic studies classes, as well as discussions of biopolitics and medical-scientific discourses in the US. Stein’s writing is engaging, vivid, and uncluttered. There is no dense theoretical labyrinth to navigate before encountering the crux of her research: the co-construction of race and masculinity over a century of US history. In this way, *Measuring Manhood* is convincing and thoroughly engrossing from the first chapter to the last.

 [Bio](#)

Alexis de Coning

Alexis de Coning is a PhD student in the College of Media, Communication and Information at the University of Colorado Boulder. She studies the history and media practices of the men’s rights movement. More broadly, her research interests include masculinity, social movements, online communities, and the intersections of Marxism and feminism.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Ricky Crano, "Review of *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing* by David Parisi (University of Minnesota)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.19>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing* by David Parisi (University of Minnesota)

Ricky Crano

ABSTRACT *Archaeologies of Touch* announces itself as an opening salvo for a new media studies subfield capable of addressing this ongoing haptic reconstruction of our media environment. Parisi charts a genealogy of haptic interfacing that begins with seventeenth-century experiments using electrostatic generators and culminates in the latest projections for virtual reality. Over several centuries, we have become rendered "haptic subjects" through an "ongoing cultural training" (43) though "tactile media"—a "shifting assemblage composed of technical elements, embodied sensations, and cultural practices" (97). No longer aiming to stimulate the full surface of the flesh, what now counts as touch-based media assures but one or a few points of contact between the tip of the finger and the screen. Far from fulfilling the fate of electronics by rebalancing the human sensorium, haptic feedback as we know it today seems a step in the opposite direction. Parisi closes his book with a spirited call to action insisting on the need for an interdisciplinary subfield of haptic media studies, on par with visual cultural studies and sound studies.

Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing.

By David Parisi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018, 452 pp.

(paperback) ISBN 978-1-5179-0059-5. US List: \$28.00.

In the space of just over a decade, touchscreen displays have bounded from novelty to ubiquity, now present in airports and grocery checkouts, in libraries and public parks, built into our vehicles and our appliances, snapped onto our wrists, and snuggled into our pockets. In this timespan, the technology itself has developed at a fantastical pace. Since the 2004 release of Nintendo DS, the first successful mass-market touchscreen device, the US Patent and Trademark Office has reviewed some two million applications and granted nearly 800,000 patents related to touchscreen development and design. The commercial enthusiasm for the future of technologized touch could hardly be more pronounced. Fading fast is the age of the unapproachable image, the unidirectional interface, the ever looming, ever alien spectacle. Tech developers and marketers hail ours as a new era in sensorial rebalancing, with products like multi-touch displays and force feedback controllers heralding the collapse of the strong visual bias of late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century computing and, more broadly, the twilight of ocularcentric modernity.

David Parisi's momentous new book *Archaeologies of Touch* announces itself as an opening salvo for a new media studies subfield capable of addressing this ongoing haptic reconstruction of our media environment. Parisi charts a genealogy of haptic interfacing that begins with seventeenth-century experiments using electrostatic generators and culminates in the latest projections for virtual reality (and something Parisi dubs "the teledildonic imaginary" (303)). Parisi's book is in close rapport with Lisa Gitelman's

inquiries into the normalization and routinization of earlier modes of media interfacing¹, as well as with Jonathan Crary's landmark work on nineteenth-century visual culture.² It also supplies a powerful rejoinder to the influence the latter's work has had, as *Archaeologies of Touch* explores how, over several centuries, we have become rendered "haptic subjects" through an "ongoing cultural training" (43) in "tactile media"—a "shifting assemblage composed of technical elements, embodied sensations, and cultural practices" (97). While Parisi calls for others to develop counter-narratives, his is the story of a "progressive mediatization of touch" (150). By the time we get to the touchscreen and the smartphone, we find "the whole of the tactile system [reduced] to the single point of contact between finger and screen" (275). Parisi's approach is scholarly and sober, yet it is hard not to view this as a still-unfolding tragedy. With the flattening of touch, its multifaceted sensitivities and capacities are pruned down and primed to engage a stultifying interface that struggles to simulate such outmoded contrivances as sliders, buttons, and knobs.

The first chapter—Parisi appropriately calls them "interfaces"—depicts two centuries of attempts to manipulate touch sensitivities through the use of electrical currents. Beyond the electrostatic generator (of 1663), we find the Leyden jar (1745) and Alessandro Volta's first batteries (1800). By the end of the eighteenth century, "electricity [had become] an object of scientific curiosity, a commodity for spectacular consumption, and a medical technology" (45). Alongside these developments, especially in the run-up to "the golden age of electrotherapy" (1880–1920), bloomed an enduring commercial interest in tactile media. A genealogy in the Foucauldian mold, Parisi's work implicitly invites us to contemplate how at each turn things might have evolved otherwise. But the express focus is to supply a culturally and historically informed critique of the present, specifically a critique of how new media apparatuses channel and distribute power today. Along the way, Parisi seeks to perform a double rescue of touch: first, from its diminution by emergent habits or practices of the touchscreen trend; second, from the margins of media studies as it has been conceived of and institutionalized to date. It is touch, Parisi argues, that supplied the "original mode of communicating with electrical machines" (95), and so it is touch that today we are most in need of recovering.

Interface 2 examines the increasing refinement of haptic research towards the turn of the twentieth century: the consolidation of power in the space of the lab, and the standardization of experimental protocols and measurement techniques. Touch, as "an object of rational experimentation" (107), gradually was "enclose[d] within a new epistemological framework" (105) that we continue to operate within. Parisi depicts this process of normalization and management as one in which the flesh was "rendered as data" (125). This rendering, in turn, would open the door for "the *idea* that touch could have its own particular, formalized, machine-generated language" (160). Interface 3 looks at a series of episodes in the broad movement to integrate touch into the "communicative economy" that now plays such a decisive role in the maintenance and reproduction of contemporary capitalist societies. The extraordinary efforts Parisi culls from the archives (think Teletactor, Tongue of the Skin, Tactile TV) would, alas, all fail, or at least fail to travel beyond the space of the lab. But even in failure, early- to mid-twentieth century touch research laid important groundwork for the distinctly capitalistic (and often militarized) cultivation of the twenty-first century haptic subject. As psychophysicists, linguists, electrical engineers, and eventually computer scientists came to imagine touch as a refined communications system, "the skin's vast expanse became an untapped and underexploited resource...that could be capitalized on through the design and iterative refinement of signaling systems and languages" (194).

As snarled in commercial influences as haptics research has become, the discourse and ideologies that Parisi examines nonetheless evidence a formidable humanistic counterpull. Interface 4 covers the period from the late 1960s through “the cybicultural moment” of the mid-1990s. Parisi dubs this “the experimental era of touch feedback computer interfaces” (215), marking not just the next stage in the progressive “instrumentalization, rationalization, and disciplining of touch” (217) but “a wholesale... rearticulation of touch’s social, psychological, and economic utility” (219). This era of haptic research and product development (like General Electric’s exoskeletal apparatuses that incorporate force feedback to allow the operator not just to manipulate objects remotely but, crucially, “to feel at a distance” (222)) could be characterized as rather utopian. The technological advancement and the ideological fervor seemed to be keeping stride. And this where the commercial investments really begin flooding in.

Interface 5 takes up the “material dedifferentiation of interfaces accomplished by the touchscreen’s flat glass” (264), a product made possible only through “a normative process of selecting which objects, forces, and contacts could and should be rendered as sensations” (261). By the early 2000s, it would fall to the marketers and advertisers to shape our ideas of and expectations for what remains of technologized touch. In this scenario, consumers—increasingly hailed as “haptic subjects”—are prompted to see themselves as missing something vital in their everyday interfacing with the digital world, something only corporations like Immersion or Oculus or Google can offer. Parisi offers a close reading of a suite of print advertisements and sloganengineering to reveal “the process by which the new mode of interfacing became naturalized and seemingly instinctual.” (273) No longer aiming to stimulate the full surface of the flesh, what now counts as touch-based media assures but one or a few points of contact between the tip of the finger and the screen. Far from fulfilling the fate of electronics by rebalancing the human sensorium, haptic feedback as we know it today seems a step in the opposite direction. “What the newly empowered, anesthetized finger could touch, it could not feel.” (279)

So concludes the evolution of tactile media to date, but for Parisi, something of touch persistently escapes the rubric of haptics. “The *inability* to faithfully and convincingly simulate touch has allowed the real to maintain its value even in a hypermediated and simulated culture” (327). On the flipside, the three centuries of interfacing Parisi accounts for make it plain that “touch can no longer be considered a sense that has been neglected...by mediation systems.” (330) Parisi closes his book with a spirited call to action insisting on the need for an interdisciplinary subfield of haptic media studies, on par with visual cultural studies and sound studies. Parisi’s call seems somewhat paradoxical, however, for what his meticulous genealogy demonstrates above all else is the fact that the sweeping potential long-heralded by haptics propaganda is but a myth, a technoscience fantasy and a grandiose advertising pitch. The plot to mediatize touch has not and likely cannot succeed, Parisi seems to suggest, as he dissects past and present dreams of building virtual reality’s “killer app.” The tactile remains all too real. Next to his own formidable demythologization, Parisi’s insistence that media studies treat touch as equivalent to vision and sound seems somewhat overinflated. What would be the point of haptic media studies if the influence and cultural adoption of haptic media stops short at vibrating theater seats, Nintendo Rumble Paks, buzzing alerts from our smart watches and phones, and whatever reductive, unconvincing simulations VR systems might manage to conjure in the coming years?

Archaeologies of Touch is lucid, scrupulous, rigorously grounded, and exceedingly informed without ever getting mired in high theory or inconsequential historical asides. If there is a flaw in the project, it is that the “haptic subject” that Parisi ultimately reveals remains so scattered and incomplete and largely underwhelming in its cultural

effect. *Archaeologies of Touch* is a significant achievement in media research, yet Parisi envisions it as but the tip of the iceberg for an emerging subdiscipline. His genealogy, capped by an incisive condemnation of the current reductivism of touchscreen technoculture, would seem to cut short the task going forward for such a subfield. This should be seen as more a commendation than a criticism of Parisi's powerful work.

Notes

1. Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. [D](#)
2. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. [D](#)



Ricky Crano



Ricky D. Crano teaches critical media studies and writing at Tufts University and is completing a book about neoliberalism and digital culture called *Swipe Right: Posthuman Capital and the Social Media Subject*. He lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Patrick ffrench, "Review of 'The Essentialist Villain: On Leo Bersani' by Mikko Tuhkanen (State University of New York Press, 2018)," *Lateral* 7.2 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.20>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *The Essentialist Villain: On Leo Bersani* by Mikko Tuhkanen (State University of New York Press)

Patrick ffrench

ABSTRACT Mikko Tuhkanen's provocative and comprehensive study of the work of Leo Bersani deserves the status of a decisive and paradigm-shifting event in the field of critical theory. Bersani's work, which has evolved over a period of over fifty years, emerges as something like a Trojan Horse within the hegemonic camp of critical theory for which only difference and alterity are positive and mobile. Tuhkanen draws out and in so doing sharpens Bersani's consistent call for a radical re-assessment of precisely those concepts and values connoted as negative, redundant, static, or even politically and ethically dangerous in the broad orthodoxy of critical theory: sameness, essence, narcissism, the speculative. Tuhkanen shows adeptly, through a series of engagements with Bersani's preferred critical objects—Baudelaire, Freud, Proust, Beckett, Jean Laplanche, to name only those most prominent—how Bersani, the "essentialist villain," has wielded the critical armory of essence against, but also within, the domain of what is construed as a pervasive ontology of loss, lack, and trauma.

The Essentialist Villain: On Leo Bersani. By Mikko Tuhkanen. New York: State University of New York Press, 2018. Pp. 248 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8166-9530-0. US List \$90.00.

Mikko Tuhkanen's provocative and comprehensive study of the work of Leo Bersani deserves the status of a decisive and paradigm-shifting event in the field of critical theory. Bersani's work, which has evolved over a period of over fifty years, emerges as something like a Trojan Horse within the camp of critical theory for which only difference and alterity are positive and mobile. Tuhkanen draws out and in so doing sharpens Bersani's consistent call for a radical re-assessment of precisely those concepts and values connoted as negative, redundant, static, or even politically and ethically dangerous in the broad orthodoxy of critical theory: sameness, essence, narcissism, the speculative.

Tuhkanen shows adeptly, through a series of engagements with Bersani's preferred critical objects—Charles Baudelaire, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, Jean Laplanche, to name only those most prominent—how Bersani, the "essentialist villain," has wielded the critical armory of essence against, but also within, the domain of what is construed as a pervasive ontology of loss, lack, and trauma. This also entails a frontal offensive on the correlative ally of this ontology in theories and cultures of redemption (Tuhkanen clarifies Bersani's considered rejection of the work of Walter Benjamin, for example). Sameness, elaborated independently of its negative place in the schema of fascinating and paralyzing otherness, turns out to be richer, deeper, and more varied than one might have suspected. A particularly productive seam is found, via Proust, Beckett, Maurice Blanchot, and Gilles Deleuze, in the Leibnizian monad, an "alternate philosophical genealogy" (30) out of which Tuhkanen pulls the felicitous term "homonadology," wherein "monadic sameness," rather than relational difference, is promoted as an "ontological principle" (43).

The challenge Bersani has (successfully) confronted, in Tuhkanen's account, is to have wrested a kind of essence from the mold of the broadly psychoanalytic framework in which being is constitutively lacking. Drawing some impetus from Deleuze and Félix Guattari (whose parallel reconfiguration of desire perhaps deserved greater attention), Tuhkanen's Bersani has developed a theory of desire based not on lack or on the scene of the subject in thrall to the other. Instead, desire emerges as an appetite for variegated sameness which, severed from the fraught psychology of intersubjectivity, is colored by the somewhat indifferent appreciation of Baudelairean *correspondances*, an example recurrently evoked by Tuhkanen. Indeed the serial patterns and sensory echoes imagined in Baudelaire's sonnet promote an *aesthetics* of desire. Bersani's desire is provocatively non-sexual; although Bersani appears as arguably the critical/literary theorist who has most consistently and profoundly engaged (as one engages an adversary) with the Freudian version of the human psyche, the ultimate strategy, as it comes into view with hindsight, has been to de-couple desire and sex, to de-sexualize desire.

Sexuality, disastrously enmeshed with the experience and the appeal of ontological shattering—of oneself or of the other—appears as something not at all to do with desire or pleasure, but more to do with psychology. The de-sexualization of desire in Bersani's work is part of a long-wavelength strategy to extricate desire from the paranoid psychology of persons, from the suspicion, as Bersani puts it in a chapter of *The Culture of Redemption* on Proust and Melanie Klein, that the other harbors an “evil intention” in respect to me (Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 23). Bersani seeks to free desire from the trap of the subject, so to speak.

Tuhkanen points out that in this move outside the subject Bersani is aligned with the later Michel Foucault, though not, as the latter had proposed in *The Will to Knowledge*, in the abdication of desire as a functional concept fit to the task. A different way of putting this, and one which starts to give a sharper picture of Bersani's overall game-plan, is to say that his engagement with psychoanalysis, via Freud but also especially via Jean Laplanche, has informed a rigorously pessimistic assessment of the reality of human intersubjective relations, as paranoid, as masochistic-sadistic, as driven by the urge to repeat an experience of annihilation, and as driven by hatred toward the world. This is the descriptive base of Bersani's ethos. Prescriptively, or ethically, the other side of Bersani's work lies in the careful yet enthused identification of the kinds of literary and cultural work that might allow us to glimpse another form of being. This is the true worth of critical theory: the balance between an analytic understanding of how things are and the imaginative postulation of how they may be otherwise. Tuhkanen situates Bersani precisely at that line.

For readers less familiar with Bersani's work, *The Essential Villain* will be an excellent companion to the work itself. Those whose contact with Bersani stems out of queer theory will find an extension of Tuhkanen's edited volume *Leo Bersani: Queer Theory and Beyond* (SUNY Press, 2014) and a deeper exploration of the grounding of Bersani's perspectives on sexuality in his literary criticism. For readers with an already advanced familiarity with the work, perhaps the most salient aspect will be Tuhkanen's widening of its philosophical implications. The final chapter, “Narcissus, a Cosmology” provides a good example of how Tuhkanen moves narcissism out from the restricted place it has within psychoanalytic discourse to “erode the anthropocentric frame” (167). In a brilliant encapsulation of the prescriptive thrust of Bersani's work as a whole, Tuhkanen writes of Bersani's wish for us to “unlearn [...] the onto-ethical habits affirmed by the psychoanalytic subject,” and to heed the call of the “ahuman” (167–68). This is but one example of a critical ethos of generosity which imbues the book as a whole; Tuhkanen thinks *with* Bersani, alongside him, and enjoins his readers to do the same.

 [Bio](#)



Patrick ffrench

Patrick ffrench is Professor of French at King's College, London. He is the author of *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *The Cut: Reading Bataille's Histoire de l'œil* (British Academy, 2000), *After Bataille: Sacrifice, Exposure, Community* (Legenda, 2007) and *Thinking Cinema with Proust* (Legenda, 2018), and joint editor of *The Tel Quel Reader* (Routledge, 1998).



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053

Nicole T. Castro, "Review of 'Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference' by Grace Kyungwon Hong (University of Minnesota Press, 2015)," *Lateral* 7.2(2018).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L7.2.21>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Book Reviews

Issue 7.2 (Fall 2018)

Review of *Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference* by Grace Kyungwon Hong (University of Minnesota Press)

Nicole T Castro

ABSTRACT As social issue fatigue threatens to isolate even the most robust justice scholars and activists, Hong asks us to hold our contemporary complexities in unresolved tension. She invites us back to the table, asking us to attend to how our lives and others' deaths are related and to how neoliberalism works to redefine, and obfuscate, these connections. To understand how racialized, sexualized, and gendered differences are produced, Hong argues that exploring death, as well as the work of neoliberal technologies to erase marginalized memories of death, reveals the uneven distribution of precarity and violence. The book will benefit any seminar or study that seeks to parse the tangled complexity of contemporary oppressions in and through U.S. American political structures, as well as any who seek an exemplar of how to do so with academic rigor, exceptional feminist citation practices, and ethical elegance.

Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference. By Grace Kyungwon Hong. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Pp. 200. (paper) ISBN 978 1 4384 6967 6. US List \$25.00

As social issue fatigue threatens to isolate even the most robust justice scholars and activists, Grace Kyungwon Hong asks us to hold our contemporary complexities in unresolved tension. She invites us back to the table, asking us to attend to how our lives and others' deaths are related and to how neoliberalism works to redefine and obfuscate these connections. To understand how racialized, sexualized, and gendered differences are produced, Hong argues that exploring death, as well as the work of neoliberal technologies to erase marginalized memories of death, reveals the uneven distribution of precarity and violence.

Hong posits *difference* and *impossibility* as analytic tools to navigate the intricate ways that neoliberal efforts, claiming to protect marginalized lives, are instead exacerbating their deaths. These two tools avoid replicating the violences of glossing, generalizing, or erasing "those whose lives are unprotectable, whose social and political statuses are so negligible that they do not merit recognition or protection" (12). She defines her concepts with great specificity, re-contextualizing and extending her terms across each chapter's analysis. These tools act as political strategy against neoliberal powers. Hong's *difference*, inspired from Audre Lorde's philosophy, is "a cultural and epistemological practice that holds in suspension (without requiring resolution) contradictory, mutually exclusive, and negating impulses" (7). The *impossible* is an interrogative gift of alternative worlds and undreamt possibilities, born of irreconcilable tensions; it is the act of "posing a question that can never be answered, but that must be continually addressed, enacting a temporality of suspension rather than a resolution" (15). Neoliberalism is an "epistemological structure of disavowal" that "affirms certain modes of racialized,

gendered, and sexualized life" in order to "disavow its exacerbated production of premature death" (7). For her analyses, Hong builds on Agamben's notion of bare life and Foucault's theories of biopolitics, showing how neoliberalism spans two co-existing forms of socially sanctioned death: a "new form of (bio)power that 'lets die,' **and** outright deadly, necropolitical regimes that 'make die'" (13).

Hong curates a masterful series of analyses to explore difference, pulling exemplars and wisdom from literature, ghosts, queer reproductive experiences, jazz, and even the academy. The introduction sings, introducing "legacy" and "Blackness-as-multiple" through Lorde's relationship to Malcolm X's voice. Chapter 1 follows difference through a genealogy of Chicana feminist movements as Hong explores how Oscar Zeta Acosta's and Ana Castillo's literary works invoke irony and humor to mourn Chicana/o death. In Chapter 2, Hong analyzes how Lorde and Cherríe Moraga trouble moralism to disrupt respectability and legibility in their own embrace of the erotic, shame, and inadequacy. Continued in Chapter 3, Hong ties reproductive respectability's connections to both slavery and queer possibilities and futurities, emphasizing what jazz improvisation teaches us about the impossibility of each. Chapter 4 takes queer theories of reproduction to school, revealing new paths for Black feminists faced with the material and epistemological violences of "excellency" that render the university a biopolitical institution.

Hong grounds each analysis in queer and women of color feminisms, a scholarly tradition committed to activism, theory, and cultural practices. She practices what she provokes—a thoughtful, unwavering attention to complexities and contributions, guided by Lorde's question, "in what way do I contribute to the subjugation of any part of those who I call my people?" (63). In doing so, Hong creates space between life and death and the tensions of each, inviting us in to witness the (im)possibilities of breaking this binary as well as how useful the binary is to neoliberal powers, affects, and politics. In its lack of prescriptive impulse, each analysis is inclusive to readers who study other representations or manifestations of violence. Hong argues the epistemological importance of refusing to predict or prescribe, as hers is a "project of pursuing a complex liberation without any guarantee of a certain or knowable future" (34). Any reader discomfort from this is a success of the book.

In questioning the ubiquity of death, Hong's analyses are bountifully creative, speaking new futures into being and detailing obstacles to the task. Although Hong does not explicitly tie her research to afrofuturist work, her robust Black feminist orientation imbues such a connection. Exploring legacy and new futures, she pursues "the only way to be able to break out of the already-colonized definitions of what we can and want and do, and of how to live" (80). Science fiction and other forms of afrofuturism would be at home among her examples, serving a second amplification purpose as she clearly connects obstructed world-making to more "canonical" works of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault.

Hong lyrically draws us between the "immensely systemic and immediately interpersonal," or the macro of the contemporary oppressive moment and the micro of how it is built between us (147). *Affect*, Hong argues, is that which contributes to the subjugation of our peoples, modalities that mobilize "terror and loathing against those populations in order to legitimate their disposability" (76) and, inversely, are used to justify our own secure positions. Hong ultimately asserts that "it is not fear and loathing in and of themselves that are the problem, but the harnessing of fear and loathing to structures of abandonment" (78–79). She asks us to suspend and dismantle the series of coerced, legislated impulses that lead us to disavow and abandon each other, impulses that are often turned into reactions before we consciously register them. This is another

place to bridge academic research and activist practices; mindfulness and embodiment work extends widely, focusing on play, movement, and performance-as-resistance, as well as oral histories, alternative space creation, and nonviolent communication, to name only a few. Readers interested in mindfulness will find abundant, if unnamed, intersections.

Hong acts as fear-full and fear-less leader, and deserves the same accolade she gives Lorde and Moraga: “creating a politics out of the most precarious and indefensible aspects of herself” (81), as she engages the same (im)possibilities to which she invites us. This concise, 150-page read is a compelling contribution to each of the many academic and activist conversations it touches. The book will benefit any seminar or study that seeks to parse the tangled complexity of contemporary oppressions in and through US American political structures, as well as any who seek an exemplar of how to do so with academic rigor, exceptional feminist citation practices, and ethical elegance.

 [Bio](#)

Nicole T Castro



Nicole T. Castro, MA, (she/her) is a Buddhist, scholar, biracial woman of color. In research and life, she brings a lens of embodiment and mindfulness to study violence. She asks who gets to define violence and is curious how certain co-created spaces can invite and encourage people to practice new, non-violent forms of communicating. Adjacent research interests include: intrapersonal communication and embodied knowledges; how queer, nondyadic relationships disrupt problematic heteronormativity; and the lack of language around consent, coercion, and sexual violence. Committed to making her work legible and helpful beyond the academy, Nicole serves in multiple community organizations and tries her best to meditate on a regular basis. She fosters kittens, plays Dungeons & Dragons, and can happily eat oven pizza multiple days a week.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY) License, unless otherwise noted.
ISSN 2469-4053